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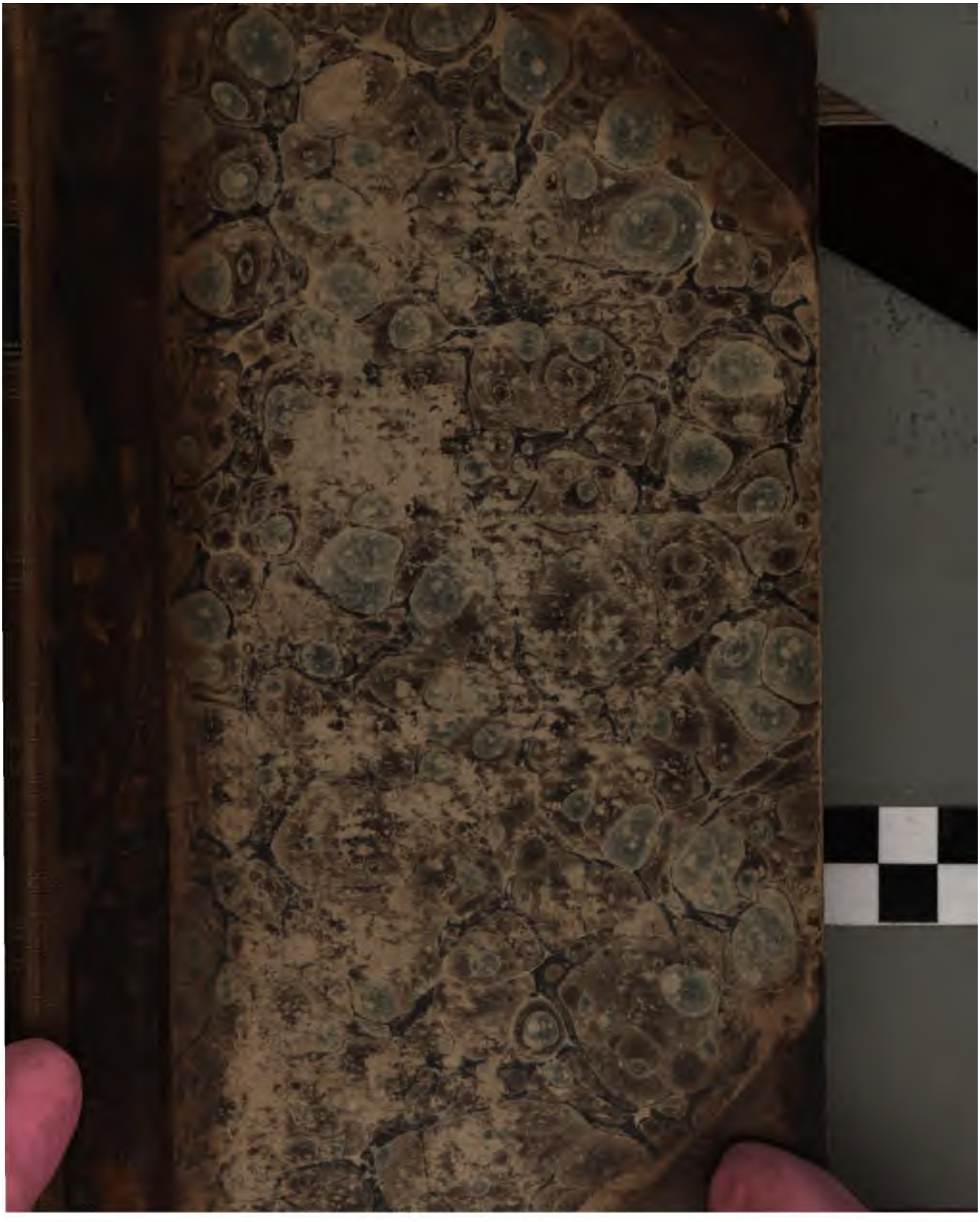

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MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

&c. &c.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

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OF

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

OF LIVERPOOL,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH,
LONDON MEDICAL SOCIETY, &c. &c.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

WILLIAM WALLACE CURRIE.

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LETTERS TO DR. JAMES CURRIE,

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,

FROM 1787 TO 1795.

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No. 1.

To Dr. James Currie, Richmond, Virginia.

Liverpool, July 1. 1787.

My dear Friend,

Your letter of April 2d reached me a few weeks ago, and I take the earliest opportunity of noticing its contents. You will not doubt that I most sincerely sympathise with you in the heavy loss you have sustained, which is indeed of a nature to require the utmost exertions of a manly spirit to support you under. I had heard of the great fire at Richmond, and read the account of it published in our papers, with much anxiety; but in the list of sufferers your name was not mentioned, and I therefore hoped, till your letter undeceived me, that you had escaped this dreadful calamity. As it is, my dear friend, I trust before this time you have recovered the dreadful shock your spirits must have received, and are again exerting yourself with your usual vigour and manliness. The greatest triumph of the human mind is to rise superior to the stroke of adversity; and this triumph is one, which it becomes the greatness of your mind to pursue, and

to attain. Vain regrets will only waste your spirits and destroy your health, and therefore I hope you will not give way to them. But one lesson I trust you will take for the direction of your future conduct, from this stroke of calamity, and that is, to confine your views to objects within your easy reach. £4000 sterling will make a bachelor independent; and for the love of God, if you can by any means squeeze this sum out of the wreck of your fortunes, endeavour to insure it, by placing it out on some security in Britain, where the principal will be safe, and the interest paid every half year.

The wretched condition in which the States of America appear, both as to private security and national honour, absolutely prevents your having a solid property in that country, which shall bring you an income. Your scheme of vesting your funds in houses, was, I think, the best that could be devised; the contingency of fire was all you had to fear. In England you might have been insured against this for 2 per cent. on your rent, and the insurers of this country would formerly have written on American property, at a proper premium; but at present I do not believe it would be possible for you to get your houses insured from fire in London at any premium whatever. Here, then, is the serious

grievance under which you labour. If you get property in land, it pays no interest; if in debts, you have neither principal nor interest, and if in houses, though you may have an appearance of both to-day, yet you cannot be secured against the treachery or the accident that, before the morning's sun, may consume your property to ashes.

There appears to me only one remedy, and that is, as far as circumstances will permit, to transmit, by degrees, some part of your property to England, where it may be admirably secured, and made to produce you an interest, paid with the utmost punctuality, that in the course of fourteen years will double your principal.

The Dutch, the most knowing nation in the world in money transactions, are fully aware of the superiority of English public and private security to that of every other nation on earth, and accordingly it is computed that they have not less than fifty millions sterling in the English funds. Would to God your accumulations had been gradually deposited there! they would have brought 5 per cent. per annum, and the principal would have augmented 40 per cent. besides. Since Mr. Pitt came into power, every 1000*l.* in the funds has been increased to 1450*l.*, besides paying regular interest. What, then,

should hinder you from endeavouring to vest your property in something that may make a remittance? If you could send over only eight or ten hogsheads of tobacco annually, the proceeds might gradually accumulate; and if you chose to have annual value for the interest, it might be regularly shipped. At any time you might draw for the whole principal with great advantage, or if it remained in this country, it would make you a secure retreat at all times from the unhappy country in which you are placed.

Such a scheme as I have mentioned has perhaps never been tried by any man in America, though it is common in the West Indies, and more especially in the East Indies; and this is the reason why fortunes have been rapidly made by adventurers to both Indies, while those to America have seldom or never made any thing in the end. I repeat it again, you cannot vest your earnings in any species of property in America that will give you a secure principal, a steadily paid interest, and is at the same time a property, that can be speedily converted into money, to meet the various fortunate contingencies that may occur. All this may be done by making gradual remittances to England, though even at an apparent loss. See the state of your friend Mr. ——. He has, I am told, a nominal property

in America of half a million of dollars. A property in England of 5000*l.* sterling, would make a much richer man; as it is, he could not at present have credit on the score of his American possessions for 200*l.* in any town in Europe; but with 5000*l.* sterling in this country, and a good character, he would be trusted for 40,000*l.* or 60,000*l.* Consider all this, my good friend, for many serious truths may be deduced from these facts. If you can get any thing into England at present, you may consider it as clear gain. The progress of time has evinced many important truths. Britain never depended for her prosperity, *in any degree*, on America. America, it may be truly said, though blessed with advantages which may in the end render her *really independent*, has risen to her late premature greatness, solely from sheltering under the wing of the parent state. This is harsh language to an American ear, that till lately has only been accustomed to the gratulations of flattery, but it is such as must now be attended to, however unwelcome. British property, British commerce, and British character, though they suffered a temporary diminution during the contest with America, have, since the separation of the colonies, risen to a degree of splendour before unknown. Of the States of America the reverse is

exactly true: they came out of the war with a degree of consequence, which success had cast around them, but every year has lessened their reputation, and they are now sunk very low in character and credit in every court and country of Europe. This degradation is not entirely, though principally, to be imputed to their misconduct. The misfortunes entailed on the English-Americans by the general breach of public and private engagements, will in the end produce reformation, and of course fortune and happiness: but these effects are to be looked for in the "womb of futurity," and long after the present generation has passed away. Look, on the other hand, at the state of Britain. Stripped of thirteen colonies, and involved in 150 millions sterling of an additional debt by the war with, and the revolution of, America, she found herself at the commencement of the peace obliged to perpetuate all the war taxes, and, moreover, to lay on additional burdens to the amount of three millions and a half sterling annually. The oldest statesman deemed the thing impracticable. Mr. Pitt thought otherwise. By great, vigorous, and radical reforms in the collection of every branch of revenue, by an alteration in the system of taxation, as far as the times would admit, by a rigid and exact economy in every line of expenditure,

he has at length accomplished his Herculean labour, and the revenue of Britain is *now greater by one third* than it ever was at any former period. Foreigners, seeing our inflexible faith, pour in their wealth upon us. Exchange is in our favour from every kingdom of Europe; bullion is cheaper than it ever was at any former time; manufactures, commerce, and agriculture flourish in all their branches; the East India Company have completely retrieved their credit, and the property of the planters in the West Indies has again become firm and secure. In one department of merchandize only is misfortune to be traced, but in this department it is universal. The merchants and manufacturers trading to America are almost all ruined. Of course you will see that, in the present state of things, there is little chance of a treaty of commerce being made between England and the United States; and the hopes which I see are entertained of an infringement of the Navigation Act in your favour, by admitting American ships to a direct trade with the British West India islands, are founded on air. Your remarks in respect to our incapacity for treating with France I do not think well founded. Our negotiators have, I believe, greatly surpassed theirs in knowledge and skill; and the treaty which has now taken place, is in fact so

egregiously favourable to England, that this circumstance may perhaps affect its stability.* The comparative state of Britain and France cannot be better illustrated than by examining the situation of their funds, which in the former are firm and strong, in the latter bankrupt.

By this time I fear you are heartily tired of my political speculations. I have been the more diffuse, because I suspect that your public papers do not admit such representations as I have made, and of course that they seldom find access to your ears. But though I have given a favourable picture for England, rest assured that it is founded on truths that are incontrovertible. The conclusion I wish you to form, is a resolution to endeavour, as far as circumstances will permit, to make the investiture of some property in this country. The condition of a nation at large affects the prosperity of individuals more than may be imagined on a slight view. A property established in a flourishing community is committed to the flood-tide which

* The stipulated term of the treaty expired during the war with France, and of course all renewal then was out of the question. But since the peace of 1815, the French government, far from feeling a desire to renew such a treaty, has gone into the opposite extreme, and unwisely adopted regulations, which have almost annihilated the commercial intercourse between France and Great Britain. (1829).—*Editor.*

leads on to fortune, but when it is vested even in the most solid articles, under a state going to decay, it must infallibly be carried away by the ebb, and lost in the general wreck.

But a truce with this subject.

* * * * * * *

Since I last wrote to you, I have enjoyed perfect health: I am grown fat and strong: I have a great deal of exercise both of mind and body, and bear it very well.

* * * * * *

I am, my dear Sir, yours always,
Most affectionately,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 2.

Liverpool, Sept. 18. 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

In the political world we have had the appearance of a storm lately, and the clouds still hang over our heads. You will see that the cause originates as far back as the late war. The Dutch suspect the Stadtholder of favouring England, when they joined the alliance of France, Spain, and America, and reaped, instead of honour and

profit, misfortune and disgrace. Finding no other way of venting their chagrin, they have fallen into domestic broils of a very desperate nature; the object of one party being the dismission of the Stadtholder from all his offices, of the other, the preservation of his power. The one party is supported by England and Prussia, the other by France and her allies, of which number the States of America may be considered.

The uncommon vigour of Prussia, and the firmness of the great man who wields the democracy of England, have at present totally deranged the measures of France, where a spirit dangerous to absolute monarchy begins to spread very widely, and has debilitated the executive government in a wonderful degree. The politics indeed of that nation are wretched; and the blow which their finances received by their exertions in the last war, seems almost irremediable.

I wish you would say something of your Virginia politics. It cannot be a dangerous subject now. You have now no committees of safety that open private correspondence; and if they do, the people who have founded their government in freedom, cannot mean that the minds of individuals should be held in chains. I wish to

hear who are your great orators, and what the character of their respective elocution is. You have daily opportunities of hearing them, and can oblige me when you please.

You will say this is a dull letter; it is so, but that is not my fault, Remember me to my fair correspondent, and tell her I long to hear from her.

Farewell, my dear Friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 3.

Liverpool, January 21. 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * * * * *

Of our friends in Annandale, I hear very little. They are, indeed, fast wearing away. Eight years' absence has lost me most of my connections in that country, and much changed the face of society. I seldom hear from any person in that quarter, excepting your father, whooccasionally writes a letter of introduction to me by some young man coming to this quarter to push his fortune.

* * * * * * * *

That I should ever wish to drop my connection with you is not likely. My attachment to you was formed at a period of life when attachments are indissoluble; and I think of you with the same interest and affection which I have ever felt. But you are not steady in answering my letters; and without mutual punctuality in this respect, correspondence is apt to languish between persons who are near each other, and reminded of the duties of friendship by daily occurrences. How much more likely is it to languish, without such punctuality, between those who have three thousand miles of ocean between them, — whose habits, engagements, and connections are essentially different, and whose only means of intercourse and connection are the letters they interchange with each other!

Be you punctual; so will I.

* * * * * * * *

Before this reaches you, you will have heard that King George the Third is become deranged. His disease came on suddenly on the evening of the 22d of October, and is likely to be productive of change, not only in the administration of our government but in its principles. The great genius, who has raised the nation from unequalled humiliation and disgrace to un-

equalled prosperity and glory, is likely to be removed from the helm; and, under the auspices of the Prince of Wales, a set of men are likely to come into office, who are singularly able, and singularly unprincipled; and to whom no scheme of ambition will appear either too difficult or too dangerous. In the mean time, Mr. Pitt is taking measures to limit this daring ambition. Instead of admitting the claim advanced by Mr. Fox, for the Prince of Wales, of his having an inherent right to all the powers and prerogatives of the crown during the King's indisposition, he has declared in the House, that the Prince has no right at all, excepting what is derived from the authority of the Lords and Commons; and he has carried a vote of the two Houses, to this effect, in the face of the Opposition, the Prince himself, and all the other princes of the blood.

He has agreed, however, to *appoint* the Prince, Regent, with power to change the ministry, but without the power of increasing the peerage, or granting places in reversion. He refuses him, likewise, the patronage of the bedchamber, and some other sources of influence. After a violent struggle, the Prince and his associates have sunk under the ascendant of this wonderful man; the House of Commons have acceded to his proposals, by a majority of seventy-

three, and the Lords are certain to follow. Thus, you see, a change is introduced into the principles of our government, and the executive power is to be administered, with many of its prerogatives curtailed. Thus, also, the Lords are formed into a firm aristocracy, capable of resisting the people on the one hand, and the Prince on the other. However much we may admire the vigour with which these points have been proposed and carried, and however proper they may appear in the present instance, yet there are some men, who are fearful of these innovations, and who foresee a danger of their being drawn into future precedents, fatal to the monarchy and to the peace of the nation. For my own part, I have no fears of this kind, as these changes are only introduced for the present new situation of things, and are to continue only till the King recovers his reason, or is removed from the earth. In the mean time, I see, with mingled admiration and astonishment, a young man, not yet thirty, beating down an opposition formed of the royal family and almost all the great families in the kingdom, and disposing of the crown of the first nation on earth, on certain conditions, of his own making, to the heir-apparent. In truth, however, this triumph is not the triumph of talents only, but of integrity. The nation,

sick of the perfidy and profligacy of its older politicians, has ranged itself under the banners of this illustrious young man, in perfect reliance, not on his abilities only, but on his unspotted probity and honour.

But you are, I presume, so much of an American, as not much to relish these praises. *You*, perhaps, consider the laurels gained by a British statesman as laurels on the brow of an enemy, and the renovated strength and vigour of Britain you may perhaps consider as hostile to the American States. Nothing of this kind, however, ought to be apprehended. The states of America, at present, hardly form an object of British politics, which are directed chiefly to the continent of Europe, where, by a happy conjuncture of things, the nation has obtained a degree of influence and respect equal to the consequence of her most prosperous days.

Write to me soon, and fully, and believe me always,

Yours, most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 4.

Liverpool, April 8th, 1789.

My dear Doctor,

A ship sailing in a few days for Virginia, I take up the pen to tell you that I am alive and well, and to enquire after your health and prosperity. To the information respecting myself and family, which I conveyed to you in my last letters by the ——, I have little to add.

Since that time, I have your favour by Mr. Slinger, accompanying the first volume of the Debates of the Virginia Convention, on which I set a high value. I have read these debates with much attention. I doubt not that they have been corrected by the speakers themselves, and that they will be handed down to posterity, as authentic documents for the history of Virginia. As you have desired me to remark on them, I will do it with pleasure, leaving it to you to decide how far my opinions are just.

The debates certainly turn on the most important of all subjects, — the formation of a

government that may establish order and security, with as little sacrifice as possible of natural rights; — a government which may repress vice effectually, without impeding human improvement, or encroaching in any respect on human happiness. From this definition it appears, that the dangers to which any system of government is exposed are of three kinds: — first, that it may provide no security against those who administer it assuming to themselves arbitrary power; secondly, that it may be so framed as to interfere unnecessarily and impertinently with natural rights; or, thirdly, that it may be so flimsy and weak in its texture, as not to be able to repress that vice and licentiousness against which it was originally instituted. The same barrier will provide against the two first dangers. All government is founded on the opinion of the governed; and if the laws give no support to a restriction on private judgment, and present no impediment to the communication of that judgment from one citizen to another, a national judgment, or *public opinion*, will, in every enlightened country, be formed on the measures, as well as on the character, of the governors, which will operate with irresistible force. A security, therefore, against the *unnecessary interference* of government with private rights

will prove a security against governors assuming arbitrary power, at least in an enlightened nation; and if there be no obstruction from government, all nations, in the present state of things, must become enlightened. Hence the jealousy with which wise men have always looked on any encroachments on the right of private judgment, and on the right of communicating this judgment, that is, *the liberty of the press.* "*Rara temporum felicitas* (says Tacitus) *ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias dicere licet.*"

But whilst we guard against the danger of conveying to government any power that is not necessary to the general good, we should not be inattentive to the opposite danger, that of withholding powers essential to it. If we fall into this extreme, the consequence must be, that vice and disorder will not be suppressed, that the good and virtuous will be exposed to the tyranny of the bold and the profligate; and, in one word, that a remedy will not be provided for the weakness and wickedness of man, the end and object of a scientific government. A government wanting in any one essential power is defective in all. It wants that solidity and regularity, which, by impressing reverence, procures obedience. The governed know its weakness, and, therefore, are wanton. The governors

know its weakness, and, therefore, are jealous. The former push their freedom into licentiousness; the latter, to repress that licentiousness, will aim at the suppression of the freedom from which it springs. Hence uproar, disorder, and misrule, tending directly to arbitrary power.

The politicians of America, in their struggle with England, had the former dangers in view; and, of course, seem fully on their guard against them. But this circumstance has, in reality, led them into the opposite danger, that of forming an inefficient government. To any person of reflection, the objections formed against the federal constitution, on account of the extent of its powers, must appear weak in the extreme. It is as clear as day, that its powers are too limited; and that nothing but a very high degree of reverence for the persons who may be called to administer it will enable it to go on at all. The objections urged against the powers it possesses are chiefly drawn from those made by the popular party in England against the influence of the crown. These were taken up, and enlarged on, by the politicians of America during their contest with this kingdom; and now they are transferred to the new federal government, without a proper allowance for the very great difference of circumstances. The

executive power in Britain is hereditary, is possessed of immense patronage, has the command of a standing army, has the power of increasing, to any extent, one branch of the legislature, and has a negative upon all the measures of both. It is, besides, supported by a slavish hierarchy, and by the habitual reverence which habit produces in the minds of the people towards long-established authority. On the other hand, the controul which will be possessed by your general government over your state governments, whatever it may be, is entirely dependent on the will of the people. Your president is elective, your senate and representatives are elective; and each individual exercising authority is not only immediately dependent on public opinion for the continuance of that authority, but is likewise personally amenable to legal punishment for any malversation in office. If to this the nature and extent of the country, the opposite interests and jealous observation of the state governments, and the state of society among you be added, there seems little less than an impossibility in the way of the general congress collectively, or the president individually, raising an arbitrary power on the ruins of general liberty.

It appears to me that the true security of liberty is not generally understood among you. In the frequent references made in your debates to the history of the nation, it is universally taken for granted, that the House of Commons is the palladium on which British freedom depends. Nothing can be less true. The House of Commons is almost always divided between two popular demagogues, one of which must be the minister of the crown. But the party headed by the Crown are sometimes in a minority in the Commons, though on questions in which they have the national good decidedly in view. Such was the case, by the union of Mr. Fox and Lord North, in the year 1783 on the subject of the peace, when, by their victory over Lord Shelburne, they forced themselves into office. When there, they carried the India Bill, against the King, through the Commons, by a majority of two to one; which, had it not been thrown out by the Lords, would have overturned the whole system of our government. Fortunately for the people, our legislature consists of three distinct bodies, and the conspiracy of any one branch against the public good cannot be carried into effect without the co-operation of the other two. Fortunately also, the forms of our constitution oblige every measure to go through repeated inves-

tigations; and the unbounded liberty of the press conveys an account of the measure itself, with all the reasonings for and against it, long before it can be carried into a law, to every corner of the nation. In general, the people coincide with their representatives, and wait the issue in silence. But on any attempt to innovate on the constitution from any quarter, they make themselves heard with irresistible authority; and sometimes, as in the case alluded to, they declare almost unanimously against their own delegates.

Hence, through the light of letters and the liberty of the press, *public opinion* has risen to the rank of a fourth estate in our constitution; in times of quiet and order, silent and still, but in the collisions of the different branches of our government, deciding as an umpire with unbounded authority. With public opinion loudly supporting him, Mr. Pitt came into office in the face of the Commons; and though for a while the opposition obstructed the measures of government, yet in the end he prevailed. Had our liberties depended on the Commons, in this instance, they would have been lost for ever. The Commons themselves had conspired to seize the richest branch of the executive authority, by which they would have rendered themselves equally independent of the King and people.

Thus the balance established among the different branches of our legislature renders each jealous of the other, and each ready to appeal to the people; and the national sentiment, easily and speedily collected through the medium of the press, effectually weighs down the scale into which it falls. The balance thus happily established renders it safe for the people to delegate great powers to each branch of the legislature, which altogether form a government of great solidity and force. The seven years' duration of a House of Commons gives a stability to that House, that enables it to counteract the prerogatives of the crown; while, on the other hand, the strength of the crown renders it safe for the people to give such a permanence to the Commons.

A strong government, like a strong man, is magnanimous in its conduct; while that which is weak, like a weak individual, is jealous and irritable. Hence personal liberty is not only secured in a strong government from the tyranny of the worthless and profligate, but it is likewise far more free from the interference of the government itself. Where the fabric of government is firm and solid, the governors can wink at many excesses, conscious that when they do interfere, there is no resistance can avail against the law.

This is a principal source of the unbounded freedom which Englishmen enjoy. The extreme license of the press, the excesses of public meetings, the bold and daring opposition to men in power, both by individuals and public bodies, and all those other ebullitions of freedom which astonish foreign nations, are inseparably dependent on the firm texture of our government, and particularly on the strength and vigour of the executive power. Government may be compared to a net, and men to a number of wild beasts enclosed in it. If the keeper knows that the net is strong, he is not afraid of injury from any accidental commotion among the beasts, except where their violence is extraordinary. If, on the contrary, he is conscious that the net is weak, he is compelled to interfere on every symptom of disturbance, lest it should increase to a degree of violence, that might break his net to pieces, and let all the beasts loose. The strength of the magistrate's power in this country is in reality dependent, in a great measure, on the standing army. On that he knows he may place certain reliance against the violence of democracy in the last resort, and with this confidence he is slow to employ a military force, and generally succeeds in quieting the disturbance by gentle methods. Thus it is, that the very engine of

despotic power contributes, under the authority of the magistrate, to the support of liberty and of law.

If I may be allowed to give an opinion, the great defect of all the American governments, both federal and particular, is, that their texture is too flimsy. One would imagine that during their connection with England, the people had found some very serious evils resulting from choosing their representatives for seven years. This is certainly the only rational ground for changing the term of delegation to one year. Yet I never heard of a single inconvenience from the former term of delegation, either in the delegates not speaking the sense of their constituents, in their attempting to fortify themselves in power, or in suffering themselves to be corrupted by foreign gold. The change, I presume, was grounded on mere theory and speculation; and, in my judgment, it will be attended with bad consequences. A house of delegates is a house of debates, of consultation, and of deliberation. Every one ought to be open to conviction, and should form an honest judgment on the best information that has been offered; and this judgment should be founded on what he conceives to be the interest of the community at large. But if the individual constituents of each member

have a right to instruct him how he is to act, and exercise this right, the delegates are only the medium through which the electors convey their opinions; and for any thing that I see, these opinions might as well be conveyed by the post. Frequent elections, however, encourage this notion among the electors. They also render the delegates too dependent in other respects on the electors. If they are not instructed how to vote, they will in general, however, know which side of the question is most popular, and the fear of losing their election will lead them to consider rather what is popular than what is right. Hence the decisions of your house of delegates will partake too much of the spirit of those who delegate; and as those who delegate are in America chiefly composed of the lowest classes of society, or, in other words, are the mob, their spirit will always be *rash* and *changeable*, and generally base and selfish. There is, on the other hand, a possibility of rendering the delegates too little dependent on their constituents, but this is scarcely to be feared in the thirteen states, for reasons that it would be easy to point out. If the delegates are too dependent on the *mob*, the senate and the executive are too dependent on *them*. The principle of establishing a balance is totally lost sight of in your constitution-people. From such a

system must follow a *variable*, *unsettled*, and *irregular* government, possessing little reverence or authority at home, and affording, of course, little liberty or security; and commanding from abroad no respect of its honour, and no dread of its power.

By this time, I conceive you will be heartily tired of this *general dispensation*. I intended to have offered a few preliminary remarks only, but the subject is so extensive, that it has led me away. And now, when I ought to apply my observations to the Virginia debates, I find my time almost entirely exhausted.

You will, however, easily see that I am of the side of those who would strengthen government, to secure liberty and promote happiness. The exclamations against the new constitution as establishing a standing army, taking away the trial by jury &c., I consider as mere declamation. What! shall the people of America be afraid of a few disciplined regiments of their own countrymen; shall they be afraid of slavery from them? They who have resisted and repelled a hundred and twenty regiments of disciplined veterans, as high in reputation for martial deeds as any in the world? There is absurdity in the idea. — What avails in the present moment the army of France to the king who commands it? A despo-

tic government, long established at the head of 200,000 soldiers, cannot resist the voice of the nation. Why cannot it? *Because the army itself is a part of the nation, and cannot be depended on to turn their bayonets on the breasts of their countrymen.* Glorious for America as the revolution of its government has been, the blessings depending on it are not likely to be confined to the western hemisphere. It is a great link in the chain of causes that may one day extend the blessings of freedom to the extremities of the earth. France is now labouring for the possession of liberty; and, what will form a new precedent in the history of man, is likely to attain it without recourse to arms. The fever with which she is agitated has spread by contagion from America.

But I wander into endless digressions.

Though I highly admire the project of strengthening your government, yet I have some doubts whether the federal constitution will answer the objects in view. The improvements which it requires are however obvious, and ought, in my humble opinion, to be all directed to strengthening it. On this point, I will however speak to you more fully in a future letter, and I will give you such an opinion as I have been able to form of the genius and eloquence of your different

speakers. In the mean time, I beg of you to send me the concluding volume of the debates, and to add to the name of each member his age and the place which he represents.

Of Mr. Randolph the governor, and Mr. Henry, I know a good deal; but who are Mr. Nicholas, Mr. Pendleton, Mr. Mason, and especially Mr. Madison? What is become of Richard Henry Lee?

I send you by this opportunity a copy of the new edition of the *Edinburgh Dispensatory* by Dr. Duncan, with the improvements of the last editions of the London and Edinburgh Colleges. It contains all that is valuable in pharmacy.

* * * * * *

Yours, &c., J. C.

P. S. The slave trade will be immediately abolished: — Pitt has sworn it: — the King and Thurlow resist in vain.

No. 5.

Liverpool, Nov. 20. 1792.

My dear Friend,

I stand before you as a culprit, making no sort of defence, but confessing guilt, and suing

for pardon. You know the kind of life I lead, a life which is an eternal struggle between indolence and activity. Compelled to work by the calls of the moment, I contrive to get through my immediate professional duties with great difficulty; but, beyond these, I relapse into total indolence. With a heart strongly attached to my absent friends, and particularly to you, I neglect every means of keeping up their regard, and have incurred, if not from you, from almost all my other relations, a series of complaints and reproaches. With a spirit that pants after honourable reputation, I neglect the means in my hands of acquiring it, and suffer day after day to slip away, with a full consciousness of the shortness of life, and with schemes of literary ambition no ways advanced.

* * * * * *

One thing that has absorbed my thoughts in my leisure moments, and deeply roused my sympathies, is these revolutions that are going forward; and, as if I had any thing to do with such affairs, I have been carried down the stream of politics. In truth, it is hardly possible to resist the contagion that spreads every where around, and insinuates itself even into the common phraseology of conversation, in a hundred ways. France lies

so near us, and our communication with her is so immediate; the part she has been acting is so full of novelty, difficulty, and danger; it is of such infinite importance, and so chequered with strange and sudden reverses; that it has been almost impossible for any man of any rank, from the king on his throne to the peasant in his cottage, not to feel his hopes, his wishes, and even his passions, engaged on one side or other of the issue. As for my part, I endeavour at moderation and impartiality with all my power. To one who has no interest in such questions, excepting as they affect the welfare of the human race, there is much cause for moderation, and even for doubt.

Liberty, in France, has on many occasions acted the part of a maniac, and, what is worse, of a murderer. It is true, she now wields the spear of the warrior with all the graces and charms of classic days; but it is impossible to forget how lately she armed herself with the dagger of the assassin, and stained her hands with pure and heroic blood. If these efforts of horror had been directed towards her declared enemies, detestable as they must always have been, they would not have been so unparelleled: but when the weapon was aimed at the heart of her best and truest friends, one's nerves are

withered with grief and horror. Great and enlightened Rochefoucauld! I bathe thy bloody shroud with my tears. Generous, brave, heroic La Fayette! I view thee in thy Prussian dungeon, pining under sufferings unparalleled; and, banished one country for thy faith and loyalty, doomed to perish in another for thy attachment to liberty and truth.

Let us cast a veil on the past. Under every disadvantage, France triumphs. Her conflicts with the Prussians and Austrians you will read, no doubt, in your papers; and see her young warriors at the heights of Jemappe, forcing the entrenchments of the Austrians with their fixed bayonets, and performing deeds of heroism unequalled in latter times. Let us hope that the influence of such an example will operate favourably on the temper of their internal parties, and be a means of re-establishing a government that may secure property and persons, without which liberty is an empty name. In the mean time Germany rocks to its base; Holland shakes with terror; Italy hears the approaching storm, with fear mixed with wonder and hope; and the whore of Babylon listens with anguish and dismay. The impulse of moral motion flies far quicker than the sound of arms; and every corner of Europe feels it now, and will feel it stronger

every day. Fast may it vibrate through the lands of slavery, but recoil from the British shores! Far be from us the anguish of dissolving governments, or the throes of the new birth of freedom! *Our* day of trial, I trust, is over: we must, however, have many reforms; these only can prevent a revolution. The ministry are, I hear, aware of this; and, I hope, will meet the occasion with temper and prudence.

Let us change the subject.

I know of nothing important since I wrote last, respecting my own concerns. I know not whether I mentioned to you a purchase I made of land in Annandale, about the beginning of the year. It was the estate of Dumcrief, close by Moffat, which once belonged to Mr. Clerk, afterwards Sir George Clerk, the laird of Middlebie. In the beginning of May I went down to that country for a few days to look at my estate. I was greatly pleased with it; a more beautiful spot I hardly ever saw. I indulge the hope that I may one day reside there, and spend my latter days in tranquillity and peace. I know how generally fallacious such expectations are; but, for all that, they gild the present moments of toil, anxiety, and care.

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Be so good as to let me know how you are, how you feel, and what you purpose. We shall, I fear, never meet again, unless you should make a trip to Europe, which I am surprised you do not think of. Do come; and let us embrace once more, before the curtain drops. With all my negligences and absurdities, and with all your eccentricities, I do believe a warm and true affection subsists between us. I can say, at least, for myself, that I know not a man whom I recal with such pleasure and regard. I am not willing to think that we are separated for ever; and if you will not visit England, do not be surprised if I visit you. Should there be any convulsion here, (a thing not probable, but not impossible,) I look to your hospitable shore for a safe refuge.

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I am, in haste, my dear Sir,

Yours most truly,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 6.

Liverpool, July 12. 1793.

My dear Friend,

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You are, I observe, less of a politician than I am, for which I can easily account.—Separated from the scene of action by a thousand leagues of sea, you are, perhaps, hugging yourself on the security of your situation. I have many fears, however, that the tempest of war will reach you, either immediately or in its effects; but I hope you are not likely to feel it as England has done. Along with this I send you a pamphlet, — a Letter to Mr. Pitt, by Jasper Wilson. It will explain to you the manner in which the war has operated on our trade and manufactures, and give you an exact picture of my sentiments on the state of affairs.

I am an enemy to the war we are engaged in, on various accounts. If it continues another year, I consider a national bankruptcy as inevitable. In the first quarter of our revenue for the present year, there is a deficiency of 1,300,000*l.* sterling; and the present quarter, it is expected, will be still more deficient. With

a diminished trade, and a sinking revenue, increased expenses to an enormous amount are incurred: we are leagued in the folly and the bankruptcy of the nations of the Continent.

Fresh taxes will occasion immense emigrations, and America will become the refuge and the asylum of those active and enterprising minds who cannot find, in Europe, scope for their exertions. Already large bodies of our manufacturers are preparing to emigrate; and those also, who, with a competence for their subsistence, pant after peace and quiet, and look for it in vain through Europe, are casting a longing eye on your peaceful shores.

Of this number I confess I am one. Probably, however, I may never leave England; but possibly I may; for I see the clouds gathering, that are likely to burst in a fearful storm.

If my determination to leave Britain is ever made, it will be made suddenly, or at least too suddenly to permit our corresponding upon it; and therefore I will state to you my situation and my wishes on the supposition of such an event, requesting you very particularly to answer my interrogatories precisely.

If I ever emigrate, it will be to Virginia in the first instance, were it only on your account. I should bring a constitution, better than perhaps

you may imagine, but not calculated for severe fatigue; and a disposition of mind not at all gratified by show or parade, nor disposed to severe exertions of any kind; but that cannot do well without a certain degree of ease and comfort, nor exist at all without some sort of business and employment.

I would wish to exercise my profession in the place I settled in, and to have as few as possible of the long dreary rides into the American woods. Perhaps I might come with rather more of what is called character and experience than most new settlers in the medical line in America. I am a fellow of the Edinburgh College of Physicians, a member of many learned societies, and particularly of the Royal Society of London, into which I was admitted about the beginning of the year. Having practised with some reputation twelve years here, I could bring some recommendations with me; and not being entirely dependant as to circumstances on my profession, that might operate to my advantage. The favour of mankind comes late to those who depend upon it, but the multitude delight to patronise those who have no need of their assistance.

On the other hand, I am, as you know, no longer young (I am thirty-seven), and no longer disposed to those violent exertions which I have

been compelled to make in former parts of my life. My manners had never the vivacity of yours — they are now serious, and perhaps reserved; my temper is thoughtful; my taste much disposed to study and literature, and delighting in private parties and friendly associations.

I know my profession (perhaps I may say without vanity) well, and have studied it as well as practised it with care. I do not suppose that practitioners in America think it necessary to acquire the medical learning which an English physician requires, and which I have endeavoured to attain. But as I have practised physic only, and have no relish for surgery, I might, without some previous attention, be unfit for an American practitioner, if much attention to surgery is required.

With all these particulars in your mind, I request of you to consider where it would be best for me to settle, if I should come among you. And take into your consideration that I have a young family, and must not bury myself with them in the woods beyond the reach of necessary instruction.

* * * * * *

In regard to your wishes for the safety of this country from internal revolution, I believe they

are likely to be answered. At least, there is certainly no danger of the people in England plunging wantonly, after France, into the excesses we have seen. From a mere spirit of change — the offspring of folly grown wanton with prosperity— there is certainly nothing to be feared. But what is really to be apprehended, is the spirit of discontent arising from the general bankruptcy and ruin produced by the war. The funding system is here approaching its crisis, and a most fearful period is before us; unless, indeed, general peace could be restored throughout Europe, of which I see little prospect. It is this which renders an asylum in America an object which every prudent man will look to. The difficulties in the way of peace arise partly from the unsettled state of things in France; partly from the extreme folly as well as ignorance of the Germans and Prussians; and above all from England, who alone could have mediated peace, having become a party in the affray. These points you will see discussed in the pamphlet I send you. As to the conquest of France, it is a mere chimera; more than half the campaign is over, and the allied armies have neither gained a single fortress, nor possessed themselves of a square league of the soil. Men

cannot be conquered, who are in the state of mind of the French; though, perhaps, they may be exterminated. But all Europe is not equal to this task.

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In haste, I am, my dear friend,

Yours always most truly,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 7.

Liverpool, January 11. 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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The destructive nature of this war renders it impossible to be lasting, for all Europe will be converted into a desart in the course of a few years if it goes on at this rate. In the last campaign more men have fallen than in the whole American war. The last fourteen days of the year 1793, thirty thousand Austrians and Prussians fell on the Rhine, and perhaps an equal number was mortally wounded. The French lost as many. In the issue, however, they drove the Duke of Brunswick and

General Wurmser out of Alsace, after destroying almost the whole of their army. Nothing can withstand the attacks of these republicans. As a nation, they are by far the most military people in the world. The English troops we sent to Flanders have shown great but useless valour: they were a mere handful; and the Hanoverians and Hessians, who composed the rest of the Duke of York's army, were indifferent troops. The Duke is himself a young man, and utterly unfit for command. This army was driven from Dunkirk by the French, and has reaped nothing but defeat and disaster. You see also that Toulon is carried by storm, and that the allies are every where unsuccessful. If the French government would assume a consistent form, I think there is a chance that we might have peace; but I fear there will be one more bloody campaign. At present the French talk of invading this country: the *attempt* is not impossible, for they are in a state of enthusiasm to attempt any thing; but their success is impossible, for the people here are united and firm against French fraternity, though much distressed and dissatisfied with the war.

We are at present broken in our spirits by ease, opulence, and luxury; but a foreign inva-

sion would restore our ancient military character.

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I am always, my dear friend,
Yours most affectionately,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 8.

Liverpool, November 22. 1795.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

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It gave me great concern to learn that Mrs. Currie's health continues so poorly. I really hope you will take a resolution to try the effects of English air; and I almost indulge the expectation that we may see you next summer.

You are now almost a stranger in your native land. Twenty-three years form a large portion of life; and so long you have been absent from Britain, and suffering the scorching beams and the numbing colds of the atmosphere of Virginia. Do not you think you should relish a sight of your old friends, and of the scenes of your infancy? About eighteen months ago, I visited your father and mother; both, as our phrase is, rather frail, but preserving nearly the

same appearance, and displaying the same kind hospitality, as formerly. I was entertained in the far room where we used to sleep, and sat on the very same bed that held us together six and twenty years ago. The ideas were recalled to my mind as fresh as if they had happened yesterday; and I could not but suppose I saw you lying under the clothes with your head bare, and a Jew's harp in your mouth, playing your favourite air. I joked with your mother about your old tricks, and drank drams with your father till we fell a kissing each other, and we could have both cried heartily.

I looked into Mean Water to see if there were any minnows, and there they lay under the banks just as when we left them. I longed to hang a few of them; but I had not a rod fitted up, and the time was too short to get one fitted for me.

* * * * * *

I am myself in tolerable health, nearly 200 lbs. weight, and in my thirty-ninth year, without a touch of the gout; which, considering the history of my poor father, and of all the Cleughheads family, I think extraordinary. I am in general several hours in the day on horseback; and to this I attribute my exemption from the fatal malady I have mentioned.

In regard to public affairs, the subject is endless, and the prospects before England not of the brightest hues. Scarcity comes on us from the universality and destruction of the war. The people complain — they are inclined to be mutinous; and yet our weak and deluded ministry go on accumulating debt and disgrace. The truth is, they have waded so deep they know not how to retreat.

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My dear friend,

Yours most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

LETTERS TO DR. PERCIVAL,

MANCHESTER,

FROM 1788 TO 1797.

Nos. 9. TO 23.

Analytical Review.—Slave Trade.—Discovery in Bleaching. — Corporation and Test Acts. — Royal Society. — Sir Joseph Banks, Correspondence with. — Birmingham Riots. — Literary Notices.— On medical Consultations. — Earl of Wycombe — Account of his Travels through the United States of America, and Observations. — General Washington. — French Revolution. — Manchester Academy, and Dr. Barnes. — Injurious Habits of Dissent.—Dugald Stewart's Moral Philosophy, Outlines of. — Chemical Notices. — Dr. Garnett. — Dr. Kippis. — Mr. Roscoe's Lorenzo de' Medici.— Manchester House of Recovery.—Public Affairs. — Literary Communications.

No. 9.

To Dr. Percival, Manchester.

Liverpool, January 16. 1788.

My dear Sir,

I am very much obliged by your letter of the 13th, and the different articles you were so kind as to send with it.

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Mr. Christie sent me the prospectus of the *Analytical Review*, which is written with elegance and spirit. The plan is a good one; and, if adequately executed, cannot fail to be highly acceptable. But, I confess, I entertain my doubts, whether, as you justly remark, the bookseller's interest may not predominate in the business. In the mean time I look with some anxiety towards the publication, which will enable us to judge what spirit prevails.

I thank you for the Number you have sent me of the new work, to which I wish success. I cannot, however, help thinking, that the philosophical part of the publication (if a judgment may be formed from the First Number) will want

depth for those who are scientific, and amusement for those who are not.

Your proceedings at Manchester on the subject of negro slavery are, on the whole, judicious and spirited. The papers which I have seen (through your favour or Mr. Cooper's) are not of a temporising nature; they speak a language that admits of no compromise — a language which, on any other subject, could scarcely be approved of. In general, however, they have my hearty approbation, both as to sentiment and style.

The situation of a person of sense and feeling in society here, is at present very distressing. Men of any enlargement of mind, who have been concerned in the slave-trade, begin to reflect on their situation; and the struggle between interest and principle, between a lucrative traffic and a sense of character, is productive of such embarrassment and contradiction, as fills one with sorrow. Others, again, talk a high language; — but I cannot go on — I am ready a thousand times to cry out, with Cowper,

> O for a lodge in some dark wilderness,
> Some boundless continuity of shade! &c.

In the mean time, no steps whatever have yet been taken to counteract the application to par-

liament, and I should hope none will. If no stir is made on one side, there will none be made on the other; but if the merchants step forward by petition in favour of the slave-trade, a counter petition will certainly be agitated, and a violent struggle must ensue. . . . . How much can be said for this traffic, you may disco er, by perusing the letter signed "Vindex," which was written by a person who was first a surgeon, and afterwards a master of a Guinea ship; after this, a governor on the coast; a planter on the Mississippi; and, finally, from the misfortunes he sustained in the revolution of America, reduced to the station of a slave captain again. He is a gentle, moderate man, and of a good understanding. His MS. was reviewed by several merchants in the trade here, and, I have reason to believe, was altered. With all these advantages, it appears to me to be more fatal to the cause it proposes to support, than almost any thing that has appeared.

A pamphlet has just appeared, entitled "A General View of the African Slave Trade, with Hints towards a Bill for its Abolition," which puts the subject in a very clear point of view, and contains a brief, but masterly, chain of propositions that bear irresistible force. I recom-

mend it to your perusal. The moderation of its language is likely to make it useful.

I am happy to find the Universities have engaged in the cause of the Africans. Something will, I hope, be done in Scotland. A letter from you to Dr. Robertson might be of service. Literary men and literary societies ought particularly to interest themselves in this question, which addresses itself equally to the reason, the feelings, and the imagination; and will, I hope, establish the first link of a long chain of triumphs, which the influence of letters and of truth will obtain over prejudice, ignorance, and barbarity.

My situation, as you may imagine, is delicate. Every thing I would say, I cannot write. I have longed to converse with you; and if you can foresee any circumstance that may call you to Warrington for an evening, long enough to give me notice in time, I should have much satisfaction in meeting you there.

I remain, my dear Sir, with great regard,

Your obliged and affectionate friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 10.

Liverpool, April 26. 1788.

My dear Sir,

I beg you to accept my best thanks for the very kind attention you have paid me in various ways, of which I retain a grateful sense. The first volume of the new and improved edition of your Essays I have received as a valuable testimony of your regard.

* * * * *

The letters which you did me the favour to communicate from Dr. Robertson and Dr. Beattie, are very pleasing proofs of the general interest that has arisen among men of letters on the subject of negro slavery, and the public discussion it is likely to undergo. The scheme mentioned by Dr. Beattie, of all the Universities of Scotland petitioning together, is a very fine one, and would have done them great honour; but it is not consonant to the general spirit of Dr. Robertson's political conduct. I see with very great satisfaction that you have been instrumental in drawing attention to the subject in France. Nothing can be more desirable, than

and tell him that I give him joy of having such a son.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 11.

Liverpool, February 7. 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your excellent letter would have gone far to have satisfied any doubts I entertained respecting the propriety of sending delegates to the meeting at Warrington,* had other circumstances remained in the same situation when I received it, as when I applied for your opinion and advice. But in the intermediate time some leading persons had formed their opinions on the subject; and the hesitation and uncertainty of my own decisions did not admit of my stepping forward to combat resolutions (which I had at first in some degree supported) of declining, or, at least, deferring, the appointment of delegates to the provincial meeting, and the approbation

* To consider the best means to be adopted for the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. — *Edit.*

of the scheme of a general and permanent organisation. I fear I am but indifferently qualified for acting with vigour on this subject. Zealous as I am in favour of universal toleration and equal right, I am but a cold advocate of any particular system of doctrines. I detest oppression in every form, and especially religious oppression; but I want the assistance of that fiery zeal which contends for its own opinions as for indisputable truth, and which considers all opposition to them as demonstrable error.

In full conviction, however, that the maxims of complete toleration require only to be examined without prejudice, to be received with conviction, I am especially anxious that our proceedings should be directed by candour and moderation. By such means we shall find the understandings of our adversaries permeable to truth, and that general conviction of the justice of our claim pervade society, *the happy and the necessary prelude* of the corresponding change of measures in a wise government. By these maxims it is my wish that our conduct should be governed, and on these only I can act. But some of the advocates of the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts are guided by a warmer, and, it may be, a more enlightened zeal. They contend for almost any means that may bring

the subject into notice: they fear no violence; and they almost court opposition; as if the object were rather to excite, than to remove prejudice — rather to inflame, than to allay animosities — rather to connect a band of sectaries together by a sense of mutual wrongs, than to unite a whole nation in the bonds of equal freedom and universal good will! But I will not trouble you with general remarks.

I received the pamphlet you were so good as to send me. I have read it with care, and think such publications will do much good. The article signed "Lancastriensis" has my hearty approbation. I am at no loss to guess at its author. If the Editors mean to go any further, I should wish them to insert the preamble of an act by the State of Virginia, giving the universal right of worship and religious opinions to all the members of the State. It is a very fine composition.

What turn things may take here, I know not. A few days ago, there was no chance of the opposite party moving against us; but the example of Manchester, and the warmth diffused by the meeting there, may perhaps reach us. If it should, we shall treat them with all respect, and our reply (if any there be) will be addressed, I hope, to men rather in error than intentionally

wrong. But the business will perhaps blow over.

With every good wish,

I am, my dear Sir,

Your faithful and obliged friend and servant,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 12.

Liverpool, April 22. 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

I do not think that I have made sufficient acknowledgments for your most friendly letter, from which I received so much comfort and pleasure. I have been on the point of sitting down several times to express my feelings more fully on the subject,* but have been prevented by accidental occurrences. The manner in which you express yourself of our future hopes is most pleasing, and carries with it great weight and much consolation. I have ever held this hope firmly; I trust that mind is imperishable, and that the whole man does not descend into the grave.

* The death of their much-valued friend Miss Cropper. — *Edit.*

All night my ears have been dinned with the ringing of bells. When you reflect on the cause, you will not wonder if the sound seemed to me very mournful. You will guess that we are rejoicing on the issue of Mr. Wilberforce's motion. A letter which I have from Mr. Milnes * speaks of the business in the following terms:—

"The great majority that appeared against us in the division, was expected, before the debate, to have been much greater. An infatuation had gone forth, that if the motion was carried, the West Indies would be lost, a civil war would perhaps ensue, and the revenues become bankrupt. Strange to say, this had seized the country gentlemen particularly. I still have no doubt that, in the end, we shall gain our object. It is a melancholy reflection, to think of so many gentlemen having promised their votes, who were therefore ashamed of changing their opinions: nevertheless, several gentlemen avowed their alteration of sentiments. I do not think there ever were such speeches as those of Fox and Pitt; and they both pledged themselves at all times, and in all situations, to support the entire abolition to the utmost of their abilities. Never was there such a one-handed debate. I

* M.P. for the city of York.

must, however, do the other side the justice to say, that, except T. and C., there was not one of them who spoke, that did not give his opinion that a gradual abolition, or an abolition in time, ought to take place, but not so violently and immediately." He goes on, and concludes, — "I have not a shadow of doubt of the trade being abolished in a few years, and I have sanguine expectations of doing it immediately."

I conclude from this that there is an intention of bringing the same question forward again early in next session.

* * * *

With every sentiment of respect and regard,
I am, my dear Sir,
Your obliged and affectionate friend,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 13.

Liverpool, June 2. 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have this moment received your favour of yesterday; and being obliged to set out in a few minutes on a journey into the country, I have only time to thank you, which I do most cor-

stranger, you have spoken of me in a way which I do not deserve. Excepting on the occasion I mentioned, I think it likely he never heard of me; and that correspondence, it is possible, he may have forgotten. If I were by you, I should like to submit the correspondence to your inspection. You may remember the alarm respecting the insect called the "Hessian fly." The Privy Council referred the subject to Sir Joseph Banks and the Royal Society; and, on the report of a committee, prohibited the importation of American wheat for a great while. Cargoes that arrived here were suffered to be stored; for Mr. Pitt, in the hearing of a friend of mine who was examined before the Privy Council, refused to allow it to be shipped to France; contending very nobly, against Lord H., that what it was not proper for ourselves to receive, it was not fit that we should send to others. On examination into the history of this insect, I found it was of the caterpillar tribe, and fed on the green leaves and stalks, proving destructive by consuming them; but never preying, so far as I could hear, on the ripe grain. Many respectable individuals, who had seen it in America, coincided in this. I wrote to Sir Joseph Banks, acquainting him of this circumstance, and stating a number of particulars (with all proper defer-

ence), that seemed to render the danger of importing it chimerical; one of which was the heat of the cargo on its passage. Sir Joseph answered in civil but general terms, and I replied at some length. I heard no more. The truth was, previous to the arrival of my letter, the committee (Sir Joseph and Dr. Blagden) had given in their report, in which they had mistaken the insect, and supposed it of the Diptera tribe, and to be what is called the "*flying weevil*," which feeds exclusively on the *ripe grain*.

They discovered their mistake, and gave in a corrected report, but still confirming their original opinion of the danger; on which the privy council confirmed the order they had on their first report issued. I saw all this afterwards in the printed proceedings of the privy council, for the president said not a word of it. In the mean time, great inconvenience took place in the out ports, particularly here, by the stoppage of remittances, the detention of shipping, &c.; and government, after many months (eight or ten), bought the imprisoned wheat at prime cost, kiln-dried it, and resold it at great loss; and almost immediately after, took off the prohibition. I must confess to you, I was not a little surprised on reading the printed proceedings, to see the President's pertinacity, if I may use such a

word; and it sometimes occurred to me, that it would have been better if I had written immediately to Mr. Pitt. I did not, however, write to any other person. One thing too a little surprised me. Though reports on the subject of this insect, from various parts of the world, Germany, America, &c., were given in by Sir Joseph Banks to the privy council, and by them printed, yet my letter did not appear, which contained the exact statement on which (when it arrived from America) they, many months afterwards, reversed their order.

I have been desired, by some of the College of Physicians of Edinburgh, to offer myself as a candidate to be a fellow, with assurance of success, as a matter of course; and I am advised to do it at this time, as they are about to print a new edition of their Pharmacopœia; on which account, they say, several respectable names are applying, among which is Dr. Simmons. I have such confidence in your judgment, that I should like to hear what you think of this. The expense I should not much mind, if I thought it likely to be of any use in giving respectability to one, who is yet little decorated with distinctions of this kind. Your opinion, if you will be at the trouble of giving it, will decide me.

Dr. Lettsom, some time ago, sent me an

honorary diploma as a member of the Medical Society of London. I some time after sent a paper, which I am told was voted to be published, and will appear in their next volume. It is on convulsive diseases.

Hoping to hear from you at your leisure, and full of gratitude for your kindness and for the activity of your friendship, which does me such singular honour, I am, in haste,

My dear Friend,

Your much obliged and very affectionate,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 14.

Liverpool, July 17. 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

* * * * * * * *

THIS morning's post confirms the rumours we have had for several days, that shocking outrages have taken place at Birmingham. If you have any particular information on this subject, I should be happy to hear it; for the life and safety of Dr. Priestley is an object that must interest every feeling and enlightened mind. What strange times are these! When know-

ledge and general philanthropy, the best gifts of God, expose their possessors to popular indignation! Here, you have probably heard, the fourteenth passed off quietly. There was a small and an orderly meeting, not exceeding forty persons. Our toasts you have probably seen, and I hope approved; and I am sure you have approved a song by Mr. Roscoe, which appears to me a very fine lyric composition.†

* * * * * * * *

I wish the management of the public mind were better understood by the friends of freedom: if they wish to advance far, they must not advance too fast. Conversing with Lord Lansdown on this subject, he pointed out to me the conduct of Franklin as a model in this respect. Firm, resolute, and cool, advancing a little, and but a little, before the public in his opinions, he brought the minds of men over to his sentiments, and was able to direct, if not to produce, wonderful changes. But I need not enlarge on these points to you, because I know your sentiments are always candid and rational.

I have heard nothing of your meeting at Manchester. I have seen much of Sir George Staunton of late, who has been my patient. He

† "O'er the vine cover'd hills and gay regions of France
See the day-star of Liberty rise," &c. &c.

seems a man wonderfully well informed; but carries his speculative opinions on government a good deal beyond what I have hitherto conceived the just limits. Adieu, my dear Sir,

Believe me always

Most affectionately yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 15.

Liverpool, November 12. 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

* * * * * * * *

THE accounts I received of the issue of the business you had the goodness to communicate to me, at your society, prevented me from troubling you farther, as they decided me against attempting any thing of the kind here.* I must confess, I heard the decision at Manchester with great regret, as well as its consequences. Some hesitation I should have felt on the propriety of bringing forward the subject at all; but as it was brought forward, in my own case I should assuredly have voted for such an address as you

* An Address to Dr. Priestley, on the destruction of his house, library, &c. in the Birmingham riots.

would have proposed, which I think would have done the society honour. The sketch I drew up was not quite so temperate, as I was, at the time of writing it, strongly impressed with the shameful conduct of the clergy at Birmingham, which appears, as I am told, the more it is known, the more unjustifiable. The only efficacious remedy for such disorders as have arisen in the minds of men, is, I believe, to be expected from the influence of time. We have, all of us, perhaps, expected the effects of the French Revolution too soon. Amidst all the confusion and tumult around us, the interests of truth are, I doubt not, however, advancing. We are like mariners in a ship at sea, agitated by a tempest. While the agitation lasts, we cannot estimate our progress; but when the storm is over, we shall find ourselves, I doubt not, far advanced in our course.

I thank you for your very kind observations on the subject of my intended paper. I will take into consideration your friendly wish, as far as relates to the Manchester society, as soon as I have got the other off my hands. But, in the mean time, I have entirely suspended my experiments on vegetation.

You will be pleased to hear that Mr. Roscoe has nearly finished his life of Lorenzo de Medici,

for which his materials have been surprisingly abundant; and, I doubt not, he will do himself credit, and make a valuable addition to the stock of the republic of letters.

A life of Dr. Price, written by himself, and brought down to the commencement of his last illness, is, I find, to be expected from the press in a little time, under the care of Mr. Morgan: and an account of the life and writings of Adam Smith is to come out early in the spring, from the masterly hand of Professor D. Stewart.

Mr. Hume is also in forwardness with a work on crimes and punishments, which will, no doubt, be very able.

We have nothing new.

I am always, my dear Sir,
Your much obliged and faithful Friend,
JAMES CURRIE.

desirable. On the other hand, I have known, where the senior was expressing his opinion, an eagerness to join with him lead the other to take the words out of his mouth (if I may so speak), and express in strong terms his assent to a mode of practice which, after all, may not have been exactly that which the former intended to propose. In one instance, I was not long since brought into a considerable difficulty by a complete mistake made in this way, on an occasion of the greatest importance, and where a life most valuable was concerned. The remedy for these evils (if you judge them of sufficient importance) would be a rule, requiring the physician speaking first (and so in succession) to avoid peremptory terms, and to employ guarded and modest expressions; with another rule, assuring to each an uninterrupted hearing. These points seem more important in proportion as the number in consultation is greater, and may, on that account, be worth attention at your infirmary, where, I think, more of the profession act together than in any other institution in the kingdom.

* * * * * * * *

I am, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 18.

Liverpool, March 24. 1792.

My dear Sir,

I have many thanks to offer you for the valuable communication you made to me of your thesis, with MS. observations and references. I have not as yet had leisure to peruse it with the attention it deserves; but I see enough to assure me that it is likely to be of great use to me, and that I owe much to your friendship on account not of the value only, but of the confidence and regard which such a favour implies. Be assured, my dear sir, that I feel this strongly.

I am projecting a volume on the following subjects: — 1. The effects of cold on the human frame in health and in disease, including its operation as a remedy. 2. The theory and treatment of gout; on which I have something to say rather original, though whether just or not I will not pretend to decide. 3. The nature and treatment of consumption. 4. The nature and treatment of madness. You will say that each of these subjects deserves a volume of

itself; to which I answer, that my object is rather to give an essay than treatise under each of these heads, and rather to add, if I can, to the present stock of knowledge, than to make a collection of what is already established. I have made as yet no great progress in committing myself to paper on any of these subjects, and none at all on the 2d and 3d. I shall have occasion to commit my MSS. to your friendly and critical eye, when I have got into greater forwardness; and, in the mean time, I know that you will have the goodness to suggest any reference or hint on any of these points, that may assist my progress.

You will see that what I have said is for your eye only. I feel I want books. I am ashamed to trouble you for the use of perhaps a few of yours; and yet you have always been so kind to me, that I think you will assist me in this respect, if I cannot procure for money what I may stand in need of.

The Earl of Wycombe landed here from the Havannah on Monday, and left us on Wednesday morning. During his stay I was much with him, and had a great deal of communication from him on the subject of his interesting tour. He travelled from Nova-Scotia to St. Augustine, through the thirteen States, visiting all the illus-

trious characters in his progress. At St. Augustine he passed into the country a short way to visit a nation of the aborigines of America, and thence took shipping for the Havannah, intending to return by the way of Spain and France. A direct passage offering for Liverpool, he returned in a slave-ship to this port.

Lord Wycombe describes America as enjoying a high degree of political prosperity; the people as perfectly contented under a government of their own choice, and expanding their faculties almost in every direction. The New-Englanders he considers as the nation—the men best worth studying. The spirit of enterprise among them he spoke of with admiration. In our own element, the ocean, he thinks they excel us: there is no season so tempestuous, and no region so remote, as to appal their resolution. Their vessels, fitted out with the greatest economy, and often navigated by the proprietors themselves, range along the whole coast of America, and are penetrating into every part of the Pacific Ocean, both by the route of the East Indies and Cape Horn.

Passing southward, Lord Wycombe thought he saw a physical as well as moral degradation. The complexions became pale and sickly, and he observed the teeth almost universally decayed,

especially in the female sex. Domestic slavery gradually increased; and the simple vigorous republican of New England, dwindling by degrees, in South Carolina was almost converted, both in form and character, into the West India planter. Two habits, he apprehends, operate unfavourably on the physical powers of the Americans from Maryland southward,—the common use of spirituous liquors and of salted meats. Both these were served up to him before and at breakfast through his whole route in the States alluded to.

In regard to the public men of America, Lord W. speaks with great candour and moderation. Brilliancy he saw little of, but much good sense, prudence, and propriety. He thinks the American character even more phlegmatic than the English, and more susceptible of fixed habits. If every thing were thrown loose in that country, and the whole fabric of government dissolved, he presumes little or no disorder would take place; every village contains legislators, the obligations of society are universally understood, and a degree of information on the nature of law and civil subordination is diffused there, such as no country certainly ever gave example of.

Eloquence in their assemblies appeared to him

to consist in fluency and propriety. There was nothing rousing, nothing agitating; all the great questions, as he justly remarked, having already been decided. Their political characters he thought reserved to a fault. They were cautious how they committed themselves on any subject. General Washington, for instance, declined talking on the French Revolution, and did not ask a single question respecting English politics; but was easy and polite, and even conversible. His topic was the means of facilitating and improving the water-carriage of America, on which he expressed very clear and vast ideas. When Lord W. was first introduced to him, he was on the ground where the federal city is to be built, and selling out the lots, or superintending the sale. He received him with perfect ease; and, amidst all the hurry and confusion around him, wrote five or six introductory letters for Lord W., correctly and elegantly expressed. The latter was afterwards with him several times at the seat of government, and dined with him once or twice. Before dinner the President pointed out to him something hanging over the chimney, but said not a word. It was labelled, *The Key of the Bastille*. They were walking about the room in conversation, and fell into silence: the President

was musing — he turned round, and pointed to this trophy of liberty.

Lord W. is of opinion that there are two parties forming in America, chiefly on the theory of government; one wishing the federal constitution to be brought still nearer the English model, the other leaning to the model of France. At the head of the first is Adams, the Vice-President; of the second, Jefferson, the Secretary of State. He heard (as I understood him) a conversation between these two illustrious men on the subject of government, in which the question was, whether any part of the legislative power should be hereditary; and he reported the arguments employed. Mr. Adams, he thought, had the advantage. These two men are considered as the future candidates for the President's chair; and as the one or the other prevails, an alliance with France or England (should they be opposed) seems probable.

Lord W. is of opinion that the greatest man amongst the Americans (Washington, perhaps, excepted, though he did not say so,) is Mr. Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, the framer of the new constitution, author of the funding system, &c. — a man of various and vast powers, and of courage and perseverance not to be subdued. He is not a native of the

United States, but born in Santa Cruz, of Scottish parents. He served under General Washington during the war as his secretary, aide-de-camp, and confidential friend, and is the only person supposed to possess his entire confidence.

Lord W. thinks that America will demonstrate what government can do for a people. He thinks it has already determined one most important point, that the freest government, provided it be *properly balanced*, and be of the people's choice, is the most peaceable and tranquil. He saw not a single shadow of riot in the tour of America, and can think of only two points that can disturb their peace — their domestic slavery, and their mode of election. The French intermediate step in delegation would, he admits, remedy the last, and will, he presumes, be adopted at the next revision.

Lord W. has seen more of the world, and knows the great actors of the drama better, than any man living, perhaps, of his age. He was in France during most of the years 1789 and 1790, and has resided much in Spain, Poland, and Russia. There is no corner of Europe that he seems unacquainted with. He is a very correct and penetrating young man; delivers his opinion with great elegance and perspicuity, as well as great modesty; and maintains his sentiments

with perfect good breeding, but great firmness. Personal hardships he seems to undervalue. When he arrived here, he had not slept in a bed for five months. With all this vigour of mind and boldness of resolution, he is not at all an enthusiast. He has a great deal of the "nil admirari," and does not seem to think highly of the virtues and integrity of public men. He is not even an enthusiastic worshipper of liberty, though certainly sound in all his principles; but he insists very seriously, and with great clearness, between a principle that one admits the truth of in the abstract, and the application of that truth to existing circumstances. I am sorry to see that he is by no means confident respecting the French Revolution. The foundation he admits to be excellent, but the superstructure he thinks bad, and the materials of the French character as too light, volatile, and changeable for a firm government. He particularly lamented their extreme proneness to suspicion, and their excessive irascibility, which he thought likely to produce many evils. I was sorry also to find that he was not so clear on the propriety of some other measures particularly affecting Liverpool, and soon to be agitated. Contending for gradation, &c., and progressive change of habit,—"I think," said he, "the Turkish despotism most op-

pressive, and the Mahometan religion false; but I would not, if I had it in my power, destroy at once the one or the other, nor, as a good citizen, should I think it right to operate on the passions of the people to pull down the monstrous fabric by which they are oppressed. What *reason* can do, should be done; but the progress of reason is slow though certain." Lord Wycombe lamented that the friends of reform in this country should take Paine for a leader. He found his *character* low amongst the Americans; and he considers him as operated on by spleen and rooted hatred to this country. He knows him personally. I think Lord W. an extraordinary man, and likely to make a great figure. Unfortunately he is deaf, though not to any great degree, but enough to prevent his hearing distinctly in a great assembly. I presume, therefore, he will not be a speaker. His manners are extremely pleasing; yet he opposes, contradicts, and discusses freely, though with perfect temper and good breeding. You see what he thinks clearly. When he left this, he proposed passing through Manchester; but as he had been detained here by the Custom-house, and had promised his father to dine with him on Friday, he feared he should not be able to stay there more than an hour, and there-

fore should not be able to call on you, which otherwise he would have certainly done.

I have written a long letter, hardly, I fear, worth the postage. The subject interested me, and I thought it must interest you; if I have been tedious, I expect an excuse in your usual kindness.

I hope to see Mr. Percival soon, and shall hear him on Sunday. I will write to you afterwards. Every thing in my power shall be done to make Liverpool agreeable to him. If you see Mr. B. A. Heywood soon, be so good as to say that his subject stands for the next night of the society; and that to ensure it the kind of discussion it deserves, I would advise him to put the heads at least on paper, which may first be read over generally, and afterwards paragraph by paragraph. This practice I followed myself last meeting, in reading a paper "On the Uses and Abuses of Eloquence."

In much haste, I am, my dear Sir,

Yours most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 19.

Liverpool, Aug. 30. 1792.

My dear Sir,

* * * * My feelings respecting France nearly agree with your own: I by no means abandon them, though much shocked and staggered with late events, and not a little so, with the sanguinary executions now taking place in Paris. Yet I hope the Revolution will survive the shock of internal, as well as external, disorders, though there is no chance now of its escaping trials of the most awful and bloody kind.

* * * * * *

I am, my dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
James Currie.

No. 20.

Liverpool, October 5. 1792.

My dear Sir,

* * * * * * *

Affairs in France wear an extraordinary aspect. I apprehend we shall see a new proof in the issue which impends, that there is a certain enthusiasm of mind, which, whether it turns on religion or political freedom, when once it spreads through a people, nothing can subdue. Against the giant force of long-established superstition (I apply the word to political as well as religious opinions), when called into action, reason opposes a feeble arm. It is then that, in the providence of the moral world, enthusiasm arises to oppose a monster with a monster's force. In the mean time, should the French succeed, it begins to be more apparent that other changes must ensue, in the prospect of which the most active conception may be astonished, and the stoutest heart appalled.

I cannot enlarge, and, indeed, I should tire you.

I am, in haste, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate and obliged friend,
James Currie.

No. 21.

Liverpool, Dec. 26. 1792.

My dear Friend,

I have to return you thanks for a new and very gratifying service you have done me, in the successful and kind exertions that have procured me admission into the Royal Society. The intelligence reached me on Sunday evening, in a short note from Dr. Simmons, and, next day, in an official communication from the secretary.

I must confess to you I had given the matter in great measure up; not that I doubted the powerful influence used in my favour, had the times been peaceful; but that I apprehended their inefficacy at the present moment, when the triumphant shouts of bigotry and ignorance stun the ear of reason, and threaten to involve liberality of sentiment, and science itself, in odium and disgrace.

I hope, if I live, to justify your partial friendship on the present occasion, — at least, it is my intention to do my best. But who can promise any thing with confidence in times like these, when one's feelings of sympathy and sor-

row are so deeply agitated by the convulsions that shake the moral world? The "spes melioris ævi," however, survives; and I should not be much surprised to see the present tempest subside, and that soon, into a perfect calm.

Here, party-spirit, though astonishingly increased, is yet under the general par, if I may so express myself. We have no associations authorised by the magistracy; and private life, though disturbed, is not yet embittered. The India business does not drop, but is, I hope, likely to revive.

I feel it very painful to dwell on such subjects.

I am, my dear Friend,
Your affectionate and much obliged
JAMES CURRIE.

P. S. I have opened my letter to express to you the deep concern I feel in hearing that Dr Barnes, it is feared, will withdraw himself from the College.* I have conversed with —— on the subject, and am strengthened in my opinion of the utter ruin to the institution, which, in times like these, such a step would produce.

For my own part, as far as I can judge, it is my opinion that the point at issue should be

* The Manchester Academy.

conceded to him, not on account of his importance to the College, but of the propriety of the thing itself, which appears to me so clear, that I think it ought to be positively established by the committee, if he himself were silent on the subject.

I cannot but deeply lament the infatuation which divides men, who ought, by every consideration of interest and honour, to draw the ties of union more close: but, to speak the truth, habits of dissent on general principles are but too apt to extend their influence (unless much precaution is used) to private concerns; and theories of general forms of government to be extended, in their application, to private institutions, under circumstances essentially different. If we consider all institutions, and the rules that govern them, to have their true foundations in utility, and this utility to be determinable by experience, all these vain discussions, which arise from abstract truths, as they are called, would vanish before common sense. It is on these grounds that I give my opinion, that Dr. Barnes should have the general superintendence of the institution, and be himself peculiarly responsible for the whole.

No. 22.

Liverpool, Oct. 14. 1795.

My dear Sir,

* * * * * * *

The Outlines of Dugald Stewart he was so good as to send me; and I entirely agree with you in the favourable opinion you pass on the pleasing, as well as the comprehensive, views they display of the philosophy of mind, and of the nature, condition, and prospects of man.

Taste, as well as habit, leads me indeed to approve of his system; and while I cannot but feel the cogency of those arguments that support the doctrines of the materialists and necessarians, I cannot adopt their conclusions; and still less can I assent to their bold and peremptory applications of reason to a subject so difficult and so remote. Granting, however, the legitimacy of their conclusions concerning man, I perceive, or think I perceive, that their principles extend beyond human nature; that they destroy free agency in the Author of nature; and, indeed, banish from creation the government of mind. It is true, many wise and good and pious men have adopted

the doctrine of materialism, as to human nature, without assenting to the application of it to which I allude. But such men, I apprehend, were not originally educated in these doctrines; and they have adopted them, in all probability, after their religious habits were firmly rooted. When the experiment shall be completely made on young minds, I cannot believe that the result will be favourable to their firm reception of any principle of religion, natural or revealed.

* * * * * * *

Dr. Garnett, a few days ago, delivered us a lecture on the effects of the oxygenation of the blood. One of these effects he mentioned the red colour of the fluid to be. A part of the oxygen united itself with the iron of the blood, forming an oxyde of iron, and giving the bright red colour to the circulating mass. The iron, he observed, might enter the blood in various articles of our food; but it was not necessary that he should ascertain this, for iron was a product both of vegetation and animalisation. In proof of the latter part of this assertion, he mentioned a curious fact, the communication of which is the chief object of this detail.

If an egg be reduced to ashes previous to incubation, the magnet discovers no iron in those ashes. But if an egg be placed under a hen, or

in any other state proper for hatching, and be reduced to ashes in the same manner, subsequent to the chick's being produced, iron in considerable quantity will be found in the ashes. This experiment he had himself made; the fact was communicated to him by a French gentleman.

* * * * * * *

I condole with you most sincerely on the death of Dr. Kippis. I apprehend it was sudden. A letter from a friend in London, a few days before, mentioned his having seen him in good health, and in his usual spirits.

Mr. Roscoe, who has just been with me, tells me that he has put his last hand to the Life of Lorenzo, which will immediately appear before the public. You will, I think, find it amusing and interesting, in no common degree; and in all respects (that of the typography not excepted) it will surprise the world, as coming from the Liverpool press.

* * * * * * *

Here I must close my long letter.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your faithful and obliged friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 23.

Liverpool, Jan. 4. 1797.

My dear Sir,

The commencement of a new year, as it reminds us of the lapse of time and of the progress of life, has also a tendency to remind us of duties performed or neglected, and of those absent friends who have claims on our gratitude and regard. On such an occasion I naturally recall you to my mind, and feel that I am to blame in suffering your excellent letter to be still unacknowledged. I have also to acknowledge the report of the Stranger's Friends' Society, the success of which gives me great pleasure.

Amidst the gloom which in so peculiar a manner involves the moral and political horizon, I rejoice in the final establishment of your House of Recovery, which in its consequences will, I trust, prove a national benefit. Yet, when I consider by what irrefragable as well as by what important considerations it was supported, how vehemently it was opposed, and, if I mistake not, how narrowly it escaped being overthrown, I confess to you my satisfaction is mingled with

wonder and sorrow, and I reflect with a sigh on this new proof, how little man is rational! Here, no progress has been made in enlarging our house of reception for fevers, and the institution remains in the same state as before.

* * * * *

The scheme is asleep at present; but I foresee in the course of a few months a favourable opportunity of reviving it, and I hope to correspond with you in the course of the summer with that view.

I have not seen the Duke de Liancourt's pamphlet, but I mean to procure it and to study it. If the world should ever subside into peace and repose, the subject on which he writes, and indeed the whole regulation of our legal code, not as it respects crimes only, but as it respects those fruitful sources of crimes, ignorance and poverty, will call for the united attention, — the hands and heads and hearts of the friends of their country and their species.

I sincerely condole with you that the prospect of peace is so dark and distant: — the war seems beginning anew. The death of the Empress Catherine and the conduct of her successor afford, however, a ray of hope. If, as it is reported, the Emperor Paul takes off the pressure

on Prussia, which under Catherine reduced it to inactivity, Prussia will probably take measures to influence the Emperor to peace. The expectation of something of this kind probably influenced the French Directory in their abrupt and ungracious dismissal of Lord Malmesbury.

* * * * * *

You will have heard of the great success of Mr. Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo; it far exceeds the hopes of his most sanguine friends. A third English edition is preparing; and two translations into German are advertised in the *Literary Gazette* of Jena, the one by Forster, who went round the world with Cooke, the other by R. Sprengel, author of the *Authentic History of Medicine*, both professors at Halle. The account given of it in this *Literary Gazette* (the first German review) is extremely flattering. I hope Mr. Roscoe will undertake the life of Leo X. (the son of Lorenzo, as you will recollect,) on a more general plan, that may admit a free discussion of the extraordinary events of his age, which afford very fine materials for the historian. In collecting authorities, &c. for the life of Lorenzo, he has already collected a great part of what are required for the life of his son.

The German physician who informs me of the success of Lorenzo on the Continent, communi-

No. 24.

To Lieut. Graham Moore, R. N.

Liverpool, June 11. 1787.

My dear Graham,

I received your father's obliging present of Burns' Poems safe, and am ashamed to have so long delayed expressing my sense of his very kind attention. Such a present from such a man is doubly valuable. I did intend to have addressed a few lines to Dr. Moore himself on the occasion; but on second thoughts I have trusted my acknowledgments to his son.*

* * * * *

Now that we are on the subject of poetry, I wish to mention to you that there is a poem lately published, which has been sent me from London, entitled "The Wrongs of Africa,"† that is well worth your perusal. Some say it is Cowper's; others, I hear, ascribe it to Hayley; but, be that as it may, it has very considerable

* The passage here omitted respects the poems of Burns, and will be found in the Memoir, vol. i. p. 241.

† Written by Mr. Roscoe; the preface by Dr. Currie.

poetical beauties, and breathes throughout a noble indignation and an ardent humanity.

The following description, the beauties of which a sailor will best appreciate, introduces an affecting story: —

> Safe on the sheltering coast of wide Benin,
> The stately vessel rode; and now the sun,
> Deep in the western flood had quench'd his fires;
> And the wan moon in Heaven's opposing scale,
> Hung her pale lamp, that o'er the breezy main
> Scatter'd its broken radiance. — All was still —
> When dim, beneath the sober beam of night,
> Was seen the light canoe, that tow'rds the ship
> Its hasty course directed, &c.

* * * *

I am glad to find that you are become so intimate with Julius Cæsar, the most accomplished and the most able man of antiquity. Furious republicans have railed and even raved against him; but I cannot unite in their declamations. The greatness of his soul, and the splendour of his actions, dazzle my sight; and if his head be bald (to use a figure of Burke's), the laurels of victory and of genius form a wreath which covers the nakedness from the view.

In one respect Cæsar had advanced 2000 years before his contemporaries. He knew, and he only, how noble it is to forgive. When I reflect that a spirit so magnanimous, joined to

talents so sublime, was placed at the head of the universe, and think on what he *would* have attempted, and what he *might* have accomplished, I see the virtuous but deluded Brutus and his murderous associates draw their concealed weapons against him, with horror and affright; and, as he falls, I feel the dagger of the bloody Casca cold at my heart.

The style of Cæsar is remarkable for elegance, purity, and conciseness. His peculiarity is the frequent use of the participle past, and of the ablative absolute. You will in time extend your attention to Virgil and to Horace. It was a remark of my father's, the justice of which I have seen abundant occasion to admit, that he who would make a figure in conversation, ought especially to be well acquainted with three books, — Horace, Shakspeare, and the Bible.

I write in a rambling way, and therefore you must expect me to be abrupt and unconnected. There is to be an application to parliament next session in favour of the friendless Africans. Wilberforce is to bring the subject forward; and his plan, I hear, is to propose that the traffic in human flesh shall first be restricted, and, in the course of a limited number of years, entirely abolished. There are many members who have engaged to support a measure of this kind, and

there are many reasons to believe that it will be carried in the end.

* * * * *

I have troubled you with a much longer letter than I had any thoughts of. I am drinking my tea alone in my study. Sometimes I sip half a cup, and sometimes I scribble half a dozen sentences as the thoughts occur. You will take every thing in good part.

* * * * *

I am always, my dear Graham,
Yours most truly,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 25.

Liverpool, August 12. 1787.

MY DEAR GRAHAM,

If I had consulted my own inclinations, I should have answered your last letter long ago; but I have been much engaged in different ways.

Over and above this, the weather has been at times uncommonly sultry, and I have experienced its effects in a certain lassitude and languor, extending over my sensations and enfeebling my

exertions. Sudden heat produces this effect on most men, though a continuance of the same temperature is not attended with the same influence; and therefore, the direct operation of the heat or cold of the atmosphere on the human intellect, which Montesquieu has asserted, is a mere hypothesis.

It is hardly possible that we should have war, unless the spirit of absolute madness directs the councils of nations. That this is not the case either in Britain or France is unquestionable, and my opinion is that the republicans of Holland will be compelled by foreign negotiation to admit the full re-establishment of the Stadtholder's authority.

* * * * *

Nevertheless, your remarks in respect to the uncertainty of prophecy are "excellent good."

History has been corrupted by systems formed in the manner you mention. When the womb of time has given up its contents, men of ingenuity are disposed to look on the successive events that are disclosed, as producing each other, without considering that there are many links of the chain that are hid from the view. . . The Abbé Mably, a Frenchman of some reputation, says that a history should, in the connection of its parts, resemble an epic poem;

and Thomson, the continuator of Watson, a man as solid as the other is superficial, has held language of the same kind. . . . . It is under such absurd notions that the human fancy exerts a sovereignty over the course of nature; on an imaginary connection of facts establishes false principles, and on false principles erects a system of errors. I could illustrate this by a reference to the history of England, if it were necessary to prove a thing which is already, to you at least, self-evident.

Your remarks on Tacitus are well founded. His obscurity does not, however, depend entirely on his brevity, but on his mingling abstract ideas and sensible objects in the same sentence, and his extreme fondness for antithesis. Nevertheless, I think him a wonderful man for reach of thought and comprehension of mind. . . . . I should imagine it better for you to read Sallust before Tacitus. . . . There is some resemblance between them, and in my opinion the former introduces the latter to advantage. Sallust is concise, but Tacitus is more so. The former, speaking of Catiline, says, "Appetens alieni, profusus sui;" the latter contains the same sentiment in two words, which one would think hardly possible — "Largitor rapti."

* * * * *

If you are not well acquainted with "the Braes of Yarrow" by Hamilton of Bangour, secretary to the Pretender, I advise you to read it directly. It is exquisitely pathetic and beautiful; and there are two stanzas in it which contain a comparison between the Yarrow and the Tweed, which are as melodious as any in pastoral poetry.

* * * * *

Yours affectionately,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 26.

Liverpool, Nov. 1787.

MY DEAR GRAHAM,

Your letters are always most acceptable to me; your last was particularly so. Be assured you have no friend whatever that feels a warmer interest in your happiness than I do.

* * * * * *

I hope you have determined not to leave the kingdom without an actual war. To be sent on a three years' station to the West Indies or Newfoundland would be a miserable way of spending your time: and though your mind is too firm to take the impression of folly or ignorance

from a society where these may predominate, yet no man whatever can keep bad company long, without brutifying more or less; and the obstruction it makes to progress in honourable attainments is itself a most serious objection. . . . . I am happy to find that you continue to study Latin occasionally, and that your general habits of reading are not relaxed. I would have you, if I might advise, to write likewise occasionally. . . . The habit of composition produces a thousand good effects. . . . It teaches us to methodise our thoughts, to arrange particular facts under general heads, to appropriate language to the thing that is to be expressed, and in conversation to express ourselves clearly and forcibly. Besides, it is an admirable exercise for the mind, and tends to imprint our knowledge deep upon our memory. Your letters are an exercise of this kind, for, to do you justice, they are full of thought; but when you have leisure, and strong and new conceptions strike your mind, you would do well to commit them to paper, and see which way they lead you.

A man of real talents ought always to judge it right to cultivate them to the utmost. . . . His present time of life may not immediately require such cultivation. What then? No man can tell whither fortune and merit may lead him. . . . In a

free country like ours, a reasonable ambition has a thousand ways to pursue its aim. We have seen a cornet of dragoons rise to be the first man in the first nation of the world; we have seen a captain of the navy appointed governor of a state, and commissioner for settling terms of peace which involved the deepest points of legislation and government. . . . And though the path of politics be too narrow to allow many to march abreast, the field of letters is unbounded; and if it does not present the prize of opulence or rank, it gives power and consideration when living, and deathless honour when life is no more. . . .

One mistake we are apt to run into; —viewing the characters who have acquired immortality, in the elevation to which they arose, we are led to consider their state as so much exalted above our own, that the obstructions of fortune alone seem an eternal bar to our ever approaching them: but when we compare their condition with our own, we should look at the point from which they started. You have heard of an old blind ballad-singer, who wandered along the coast of Asia Minor and the islands of the Archipelago, whose genius poverty and hunger could not subdue, and whose fame has penetrated the four quarters of the world. You have likewise, I think, some acquaintance with a Warwickshire

deer-stealer, "who cast off the incumbrances of fortune as the lion shakes the dew-drops from his mane;" and raised a monument to his fame more precious than gold, more permanent than marble. I could multiply such instances, and bring them nearer our own time and our own condition. . . . You may, on the contrary, quote a thousand instances of sublime spirits who have "waged with fortune an eternal war." I freely acknowledge it. But they who look forward to great things, will most probably accomplish something; they whose eyes are fixed on the earth, will never rise above it.

The sum of all this is, "respect yourself" and "cultivate your mind."

You will probably be surprised to hear *me* talk in this way, whose own ambition may seem to be extinguished. The truth is, there are still some embers alive in my heart; and while I talk thus to you, I am endeavouring at the same time to fortify my own resolutions against the attacks of indolence—the bane of all that is great and praiseworthy.

Let me hear from you soon; and believe me, at all times,

Very affectionately yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 27.

Liverpool, May 19. 1788.

MY DEAR MOORE,

* * * * * *

I never wrote a paper in the Mirror. Several of my friends contributed their lucubrations, and I was invited to try my hand: but, being much engaged in other pursuits, I delayed attempting any thing so long, that, as I was finishing the last of two papers to be sent to the publisher, the concluding Number was put into my hands. You must have received much pleasure in reading many of the papers. The story of Venoni (as well as that of La Roche) is by Mackenzie. It is in every respect admirable. To speak of its least merit, the peculiar ease and elegance of the narrative is scarcely to be paralleled.

I have not yet seen the last four volumes of Gibbon. He is certainly too uniformly pompous; but, on the whole, he is a first-rate genius. There is an exact correspondence between a man's style and his manner in company, where both are unrestrained. Gibbon is, I am told, nervous and forcible in conversation in a wonderful degree,

but withal is in some measure solemn and unnatural in his deportment. Hume, with equal strength on proper occasions, had in his manner a most seducing *naïveté* and simplicity, which extend to his writings, and give an impression to the more vigorous parts of his style that you cannot but have felt.

The desultoriness of one's application arises from a principle that is common to all men. Things that are *new* attract us with a force that exceeds the proportion of their value, as certainly as things that are beautiful or sublime: but it is the office of reflection to restrain these propensities; and our reasoning faculty ought to control the vacancy and desultoriness of intellect, as well as the disposition to folly or to vice. Not that I think there is no danger of running into the other extreme. Men may certainly confine their thoughts too intensely to one subject, even when that subject is of importance; but this is too obvious to need illustration.

I despise, with you, those pitiful amateurs, who in painting consider only the exactness of imitation: yet there are men, who will make dissertations for hours on the beauty and value of Gainsborough's picture of a girl with a bowl of milk in her hand, and prefer it to a painting of equal execution on the fall of Epaminondas. Not

that the painter I mention is not a great favourite with me; but I choose this instance, because the subject is as insipid as possible, though the expression, &c. is exact.

I am glad you are acquainted with Sir Charles Douglas;* I have been told before, that he is of that temperament of mind to which great men belong. He is marked, I am informed, as one on whom his country may rely with confidence, should the flame of war be again kindled among us.

* * * * * *

Your preference of those branches of knowledge which we call liberal, and which exercise the feelings, taste, and fancy, is natural; nevertheless it may be shown that those which are purely scientific contribute more largely, if not to the happiness, yet certainly to the power, of man. A few men of mechanical genius are, however, enough; but men of taste and fancy cannot be too thickly sown.

I have been reading the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. There is a good deal in it worth your attention. A paper giving a theory of rain pleases me much (though the language is very bad); but, to under-

* Lord Rodney's captain in the memorable action of 1782 — and father to the present Sir Howard Douglas.

stand it, there ought to be some knowledge of chemistry, which I do not know you possess.

* * * * * *

You see I have written you a long letter. I have taken your last for my text, for I have little to say of or from myself.

I advise you to read Reid on the "Intellectual and Active Powers of Man."

In haste, adieu,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 28.

Liverpool, June 6. 1788.

MY DEAR GRAHAM,

I thank you very much for your last letter. Do not fail to let me hear fully and particularly what you thought of Sheridan's speech. Did he break upon you at once? or did he rise gradually? Were the flashings of his mind frequent or rare? Was his speech rapid or slow? Whether did the impression of Hastings' guilt or the orator's talents prevail in your mind, &c.?

This poor bankrupt Irishman, without family or connection, has a degree of homage paid to his talents that has scarcely a parallel.

* * * * *

Considering the advantages you possess for gaining admission into the House of Commons, I suppose you go to the gallery on all great questions. Mr. Milnes, member for York, with whom I have been much of late, says that after all, for forcible persuasion, Fox is unrivalled. Yet he says this with reluctance, and in every other point gives the superiority to Pitt; — but this point is worth all the rest put together. Different minds will feel differently on such nice questions.

* * * * *

Adieu, my dear friend: excuse the trouble I give, and believe me yours unalterably,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 29.

Liverpool, August 17. 1788.

MY DEAR GRAHAM,

I thank you for your last two letters. The delay respecting my packet is of little consequence.

I am sorry that you breathe an atmosphere so tainted with the spirit of party madness*, and

* Alluding to the severe contest for Westminster, between Lord John Townshend and Sir Samuel Hood, recently terminated.

that you move in a scene so divested of order and decency. . . . In your opinion respecting the merit of the individual candidates I entirely agree; and if I were to express my sentiments respecting the great political leaders, I might with propriety adopt your language and expression. . . . The manœuvre for the meeting of the independent shopkeepers, was skilful, and might answer the purpose of the day; but, like every other mode of employing the shop tax, it was mean and dishonourable. . . . In the contest for Westminster, or in the tumults which succeeded the downfall of Mr. Fox's administration, the receipt tax was employed by opposition out of doors to render Mr. Fox and his party unpopular: at that time Mr. Pitt avowed in the House of Commons his approbation of the tax, and his determined resolution to support it. . . . How noble *his* conduct compared with that of his adversaries!

* * * * *

The situation of the minister is most extraordinary. He seems to rest every thing on himself. . . . In the disposal of offices he seeks no alliance with other parties or leading interests. Himself, first Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; his brother, first Lord of the Admiralty; his brother's father-in-law, Secretary of State; his cousin, Lord Lieutenant

of Ireland, &c. — all this bespeaks a consciousness of abilities that look for no aid but from their own strength, and the integrity with which they are exerted. I should like very much to collect any anecdotes of Pitt sufficient to cast light on his character, or to learn any thing of the private life of his father.

This is not merely idle curiosity.* In the leisure you enjoy, you have many opportunities of acquiring knowledge of this sort; and should you outlive the great actors of the present day, you will find it of high price. . . My motive is, however, more selfish.

* * * * *

Johnson's new Review I presume you have seen. It is called the Analytical, — a heavy work in many respects, but, on the whole, learned. The prospectus pleased me, and some of the writers in it, who are of my acquaintance, pressed me to try my hand in it, by way of exercise. Only one article of mine has appeared. It is in the second number. The Review of *Reid's Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. . . When you have opportunity, read it and say how you like it. I shall not be able to finish the subject under three articles. To analyse a

* Dr. Currie had been applied to about this time to write the Life of Lord Chatham.

metaphysical work, and make the analysis readable, is no easy task. Nevertheless, I understand the subject, which is something in my favour. I have engaged to review one or two medical articles, and some little Belles Lettres; but I am already tired of the business, and when I have finished the books sent me, I will not be troubled with any more. To exercise one's talents, without possibility of any sort of reward, money or fame, is but a dull business.

* * * * *

I move on well, as to my profession, but wearily enough in some other respects. . . . I am tempted to cry out at times, "How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable," &c., a humour not safe to be indulged. Your old friend William relieves me in such depressions. I made him march into the sea up to the middle the other day, where the beach was open, and the waves were undulating and foaming. An early sense of honour, with the corresponding fear of disgrace, is the first and best principle that appears in the infant mind.

Never trust a being that has no sense of shame.

Perhaps I said all this before — no matter.

Farewell, my dear Friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 30.

Liverpool, February, 1789.

My dear Graham,

Though you complain with justice of the tardiness of my replies, yet I cannot plead in excuse the difficulty of the task of writing to you. When the paper is before me, the pen in my hand, and stillness round me, nothing can be more easy. You require no preface or apology; you stand on no modes of studied expression; you request no particular train of sentiment; — you are contented with the simple and spontaneous effusions of mind, whencesoever they may arise, and whithersoever they may tend. These facilities to our correspondence, are, I trust, mutual; and they are founded on that acquaintance with each other's general character, and particular habits of thought and action, on which only, regard and friendship can be firmly built.

I received your letter this morning with Miss Williams's beautiful poem.* I shall write to her to thank her, and shall feel pleasure in this opportunity of renewing our acquaintance. Whe-

* A poem by Miss Helen Maria Williams on the Slave Trade.

ther the poem will add to her laurels, I do not know. Very considerable beauties it certainly contains; but such a reputation as hers is not easily kept up, and is still less easily augmented.

There is nothing in modern times that reflects such lustre on the influence of letters, as what is likely to take place in respect to the slave-trade. A commerce of three hundred years' standing has been exposed in its true colours from the press. The more it has been examined, the more hideous it has appeared; and this monstrous fabric of iniquity and blood will soon experience, not a gradual but a sudden overthrow. The matchless arm of Pitt is reared against it, and what shield can resist the sword of truth in the hand of such a champion? Under the blade of Rinaldo, the enchantments of error shall vanish into air!

I speak this confidently, for I have information on the subject from the *very first authority*.

* * * * *

The blow given to the hopes of the slave-merchants, arises from not one of the West India islands having interfered in their favour, though strongly urged so to do; and they ought to be further dispirited by certain communications between Mr. Pitt and M. Necker, who are likely to go hand in hand.

On this subject I find it impossible to keep within proper bounds. Painfully as my mind has been affected for many years past by the familiar list of murder which every week has presented, I feel a gratification which is, I hope in God, as pure as it is strong, in the prospect of this regular, systematic, and national villany being closed for ever.

* * * * *

If you hear any thing of Fox's health that can be depended on, let me know it. My information, nowise to be relied on indeed, says it is seriously affected. My heart softens towards him on the thoughts that this is true. Great as his follies have been, I should lament that such talents should pass away without leaving a single record behind of any action, by which his country has benefited. In one of his speeches against Pitt's restrictions, there was something affecting in the personal appeal he made against him. — "He will not deliver the power he has himself enjoyed, unimpaired to his successors. Jealous of the reputation that may be acquired by his adversaries, he is determined to fetter their exertions." "No man," says the right honourable gentleman, "shall be

the competitor of my glory, or the rival of my fame."

I am, my dear Graham,

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 31.

Liverpool, March 15. 1789.

MY DEAR MOORE,

Your two letters arrived duly; the first from London, the last from Sheerness. Since you are again to be an inhabitant of the waters, I am glad you are to meet with such good society, a matter of the last importance to those *who dwell on the sea.*

* * * * *

I think of public affairs with little uneasiness. I rest with security, in every exigence that may happen, on the virtue and talents of Mr. Pitt. Misfortunes that come unexpectedly and unprovided for, may prove serious in their consequences to the best regulated governments; and are likely to prove most serious to the freest nations, — because *there*, dissensions in opinion are most likely to arise, and to spread most diffusively through society. This applies to the first

appearance of the king's madness. A situation so new, so sudden, so awful, required what was found—a judgment clear, prompt, and decisive; an eloquence flowing, perspicuous, and commanding; a temper calm, yet strenuous; a heart virtuous and bold. If the king should again suffer an eclipse of mind, there will probably be some parliamentary provision for the occasion; and if there should not, it will occur with a precedent of proceeding on which the nation's applause has been bestowed. As to foreign war, let it come; we shall be found admirably prepared for it. But this will most probably keep it away. For my part, if we are to have any national broils, I think it will be with Ireland. The nature of its connection with this country should certainly be ascertained. Are they *accidentally* united to us by the identity of the person who possesses the Crown of each, like Hanover; or is the Crown of Ireland necessarily dependent on that of England, as an act of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland has positively asserted it to be? This question is of much importance, and must, I think, be determined. If it is not, at some future period mischief may ensue. There can be no time like the present. The government is strong, the state of our finances flourishing, the nation loyal and united. If the Irish

have no connection with the *nation* of England, wherefore should they partake of the profits of its trade, or the protection of its fleet? If in the wantonness of their triumphs, they push them on to insult, the period when this may be done with safety is over. Should they attempt to dissolve their marriage with England, England may woo them back again, "as the lion woos his bride."—But better things may be expected.

* * * * *

Let me hear from you as often as you can. Your remarks on Burns are exactly mine.

In haste, I am always,

Most truly and sincerely yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 32.

Liverpool, May 30. 1789.

MY DEAR MOORE,

I have received three letters from you since I wrote, though each deserved an immediate reply. Your conjecture is right as to the manner of my employment. The subject has engrossed my thoughts, and employed my pen, beyond any other that I ever engaged with. And I have

the pleasure to think, that in the judgment of those well able to form one, my labours have not been fruitless. Enough of this.

Your letter of the 5th of May was somehow detained at the office here for more than three weeks. I am not without suspicion that it was opened, having a member of parliament's hand on the back of it. I am not certain but this may be opened on its way to you, for a similar reason; if so, he that opens it, will learn that I despise him.

I should have been very sorry that your letter of the 5th should have finally disappeared before it reached me; because, while all your letters are welcome, this was peculiarly so. Your sentiments on Carthon are precisely mine: your quotation from it is singularly beautiful and sublime. Trench and I have read it together, and agree with you perfectly. Ossian is as great a favourite with him as with you; and, as his memory is as retentive as his judgment is solid and his taste correct, he can repeat almost all Carthon, and many other very beautiful passages from other poems.

For my own part, I delight to indulge in the high-souled melancholy of the Celtic bard. It soothes a temper too much indisposed to this vain and worthless world, and calms the per-

turbation of a heart that has, of late especially, beat too high and too often with indignation and disdain! I know not whether I ever mentioned to you a passage, which pleased me much, in the Marquis de Chastellux's Travels through North America. In the back woods of Virginia, near the Alleghany Mountains, he stumbled on the habitation of Mr. Jefferson, who, after serving his country as a general and a governor, during the war, had retired to enjoy the charms of solitude and philosophic repose. Chastellux says, that if he had not known that he was one of the wisest and best men in the Western Continent, he should have discovered it in his manner and appearance, which, though simple, was noble and interesting. Though he had only one night to pass with him, yet they became perfectly intimate; to which circumstance, says the Marquis, an accident very much contributed. In conversation, something happened to be said that introduced the works of Ossian; of which both declared themselves passionate admirers. The book was laid on the table, and each pointed out his favourite passages. The glass circulated freely, — the hearts of both grew warm, and the heroic spirit of the old Caledonian vibrated from breast to breast. This Frenchman and American's spending the night among the wilds of

America, over the pages of Ossian, affords a picture which I am pleased to contemplate.

You may expect to hear from me frequently; and you cannot write to me too often. I shall think of you with a painful pleasure, the cliffs of Britain fading on your view; and I shall track the progress of your vessel across the waste of waters. May the "sighing summer wind" bear you gently before it!

If you hear from me no more on this side the Atlantic, let this serve for my present adieu.

If there be any pleasure in the consciousness of being beloved, (and if there be not, I know not where else pleasure is to be looked for,) that pleasure you may carry with you. You have many friends, no doubt, that I do not know; but this I do know, that among the whole number, you have not one, who thinks of you with more kindness, more esteem, or more affection than myself. Trench might perhaps contest the point, if indeed there could be a contest where there is such a perfect agreement in sentiment.

My very dear Moore, Heaven prosper you!

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 33.

Liverpool, Oct. 21. 1790.

My dear Captain,

"If I were a proud fellow, I would certainly not continue to write after I have been so long without a letter from you." Mend your expression, my dear sailor; a proud fellow, in the better sense of the word, would do as you do. A proud fellow has confidence in himself; a proud fellow has confidence in his friend; a proud fellow will not stoop to the littleness of suspicion, or of cold-hearted doubt. Disdaining to form light attachments, he will hold firmly by those he has made, and maintain them unbroken, in despite of silence and absence, of the distance of place, and of the flight of time.

Let me, however, acknowledge myself greatly your debtor for the magnanimity of your conduct. You have done me "noble justice" in excusing my inattention, and writing with the same generous confidence as before. Why I have been so long silent I can hardly tell. First, I lost the direction you sent me for the conveyance of my letters free of expense; then, I lost my spirits

from the death of two of my children; and lastly, I lost my health. That I ever lost any part of my regard for you, is no part of my apology.

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Here is my Lord Herbert with his regiment of dragoons. I am become rather intimate with him, and like him much. In his exterior he has not the bold lineaments of a great character. His countenance is fair and soft, but with good sense written upon it. Farther examination shows you considerable quickness, much ardour, and traits of a mind whose efforts you cannot pretend to limit. His conversation is easy and agreeable, full of good sense, and very unaffected. He has more military enthusiasm than any *English* soldier I ever conversed with; Scotsmen I have known his equals in this respect, and perhaps more than his equals, and also *English sailors*.

Lord Herbert, you know, travelled with Coxe. He spent a year at the court of Berlin, and was a good deal noticed by old Frederick. He is a great admirer of the Prussian officers. He says they have in conversation strong character and much fire; that they have perfect confidence in themselves, and in their professional knowledge, and are not afraid to appear as they are;

that in our land service, the officers are in general far too little tinctured with their profession; that in fact they know little or nothing of it, and would rather venture an appearance in any other character; that the sea service is indeed very different, and far the superior of the two. Our naval officers are in general bold-featured noble fellows, resembling much the Prussian soldiers, confident of themselves, proud of their profession, displaying much character in their conversation, and taking their rank as the first men in their line, and such as a great nation might justly be proud of. This parallel between the Prussian soldiers and English sailors I must confess surprised me. Lord Herbert said he knew both well, for he had lived intimately with both; that his father (Lord Pembroke) was governor of Portsmouth, and he himself resided there great part of the year, and of course kept much company with the navy.

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And so I must give you my opinion of the state of affairs. Why, truly, I am no great authority. But such indistinct views as I have, you shall have. Europe is becoming fast more *of a whole*. Knowledge is more quickly diffused, opinions more quickly communicated, judgments formed on a wider basis. You may observe that

this state of things renders the revolutions of a particular nation less bloody. Why? because the general sentiment is speedily collected on any disputed point; parties see their strength, and the weaker gives way.

Fox's India bill, but more especially the king's malady, in a darker state of the nation, would have involved us in a civil war. Happily in our days, a war of words was sufficient. The nation listened, judged, and decided.

The French revolution marks this more strongly. The liberty of the press was the first step; this obtained, the result was bloodless. From Picardy to Provence, from the Bay of Biscay to Alsace, Frenchmen felt, saw, and spoke. What could the aristocrats do? They yielded or fled. Should the time come, as come it will, when all Europe is equally enlightened, similar circumstances will produce similar effects. I do not say there will be no wars, but wars will be entered on less lightly, and, once begun, they will spread more universally. That they will often be prevented where they now take place, is however, I think, clear; and, finally, they may perhaps be extinguished. Symptoms of this state of things already appear. The negotiations of which the court of Berlin is the centre, involve all Europe, or at least far the greater part. Na-

tions are pitted against each other, every side is prepared; they pause, reflect, and make peace.

* * * * * *

The Prussian army draws up in battle array. What follows? The emperor makes peace with the Turks, the empress with the king of Sweden. Prussia and Russia face about on each other, exchange threats, and make peace. Fifty years ago, if I mistake not, materials so combustible would have long since burst into a flame: and even now, I am aware, a slight spark may change the prospect, and involve the world in war.

In regard to our dispute with Spain, present appearances favour its terminating in war. Men speculate differently on the motives of the Spaniards. Some say they are willing to hazard a war, in hopes of diverting the attention of the people from speculations of a political kind, dangerous to the powers that be. Others say they dispute with us as a pretence for arming; that, being armed, they will give way, and turn their force on the French revolutionists. Neither of these suppositions seems probable. It is more likely that the king of Spain is haughty, that he has been haughtily talked to, that his pride is wounded, and that he is willing to run great risks rather than yield. Yet, I verily believe, yield he must; for what chance has Spain in

meeting us single-handed on the ocean? But before this letter leaves England, the issue will be known. I shall not break my heart if it be war. If it be war, we shall beat the Spaniards, and we shall break the double chain they have extended over South America. Haply we may bring such distress on their government at home as may accelerate its overthrow, and burst asunder the villanous web of priestly ambition that pinions the noble Castilian to the earth.

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In the career of letters, in the progress towards light, the old Spaniards are far in the rear. A few years ago, Ibberti, an Italian, physician to the Spanish court, told me that Count Florida Blanca was a determined enemy of the Inquisition. I am sorry to learn from a very enlightened Catalonian, who left Spain about ten weeks ago, that he has changed his measures, has shaken hands with the ruffian priests, and has formed a league with them for strangling freedom in its birth. In the mean time, streaks of light from the north, like the aurora borealis, are darting across their hemisphere: the people gaze and wonder — the priesthood start and tremble. In the provinces of South America, they are enlightening fast. From the Natchez and the Mississippi, that strong animal, the English-Ameri-

can, is advancing upon them, and the ardour of his bold spirit spreads like contagion all around. So says this Catalonian.

Of France little can be said. The fabric they have reared is beautiful at its base, but faulty in its superstructure. That the rights of men belong equally to all men, is a principle at once just, simple, and safe; but that the whole powers of government should be collected into one centre, is a position full of danger. Why? you may say. Because, to answer the purposes of good government, great powers must be delegated; powers too great to be safely trusted with one description of men. Hence the propriety of dividing government into different branches, and cautiously preventing those who make the law, from having an interest in its administration. Besides this, a division in the legislative body gives every question two discussions, by which every measure is better sifted, and public opinion, informed through the press, has time to oppose itself to any unjust or dangerous proceeding before it becomes law. France has not seen these things clearly. Mably and a few other pedants have misled the public mind. Time will set them to rights.

Your remarks on the grand national fête in Paris do not seem to me quite right. So grand

a celebration, in which all the active spirits were *actively* engaged, and swore in the sight of the nation to maintain the laws, was well calculated to make a deep impression. Even the splendour of the thing might not be amiss; it was suited to the people's prejudices; and where men mean to move the people to great actions, they must enlist even their prejudices in the cause. It may seem singular to you, as it did to me, but I can assure you of the fact, on the authority of the Marquis of Lansdown, — there has not been a single confiscation of property since the revolution commenced, excepting that of the church, and of those put on the pension list for private not public services. The feudalities are indeed abolished, but they are to be compensated. At this moment the aristocrats, who have fled in every direction, draw the rents from their estates as safely as before.

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Of our own country and its politics I intended to speak; but my strength fails me, for it is now three in the morning.

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My dear friend, fare you well! I have written a long letter, because I found myself in the vein, and the night was still and quiet. What sort of a life do you lead? Dull and uniform, I fear.

The sea has little attraction, and less variety. Yet there was a kind of moon-light weather, with a fine steady breeze on the quarter, that had something interesting and picturesque.

> Adspirant auræ in noctem nec candida cursum
> Luna negat; splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.
>
> VIRGIL.

Once more, farewell.

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 34.

Liverpool, June 26. 1791.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN,

As I do not know what or how much I may be tempted to say to you, I have taken a large sheet of paper; so that you shall not be put to the expense of postage, merely for the purpose of hearing that I rejoice, with perfect sincerity, on your arrival in England. I conclude that there will be no war, and, of course, no fleet sent to the Baltic; so that I hope you will make good your intention of visiting Liverpool.

* * * * *

I see you differ from me on the subject of the French Revolution, or, at least, you think so. If you think the French were either foolish or

wicked in seeking an essential change in their government, in reducing the prerogative of their king, in curtailing the property and subverting the influence of their priests, and in abolishing the feudalities of their nobles, we certainly differ. If you think they were wrong in establishing the equality of man's natural rights, and making every deviation from that principle in the social state the result of necessity, not of choice; — if you think them wrong in establishing the rights of conscience, the trial by jury, and the liberty of the press, — why, then, we differ essentially. If, on the other hand, your objections are not so much to the revolution itself, and its fundamental principles, as to the fabric of government they have now reared; — if you think that, in some instances, they have pulled down too much of the old, in others, too little; — if you think, for instance, that the prerogative of the crown is reduced too low, and that the power of the priesthood is still too high (especially as they are not yet allowed to marry, and to mingle interests with the great body of society); — if you think the frame of their government too complicated, and the parts too little subordinate; — if you judge that the legislative body should consist of two chambers, and the ministers of the crown should have seats in it; — if you

think that, though a body of 200,000 nobles was incompatible with freedom, yet that it would have been better to have raised, out of the ashes of the old noblesse, a peerage, such as that of England, than to have destroyed it entirely,—why, then, we are agreed. And, lastly, if you conceive that the example of France is no example to England, whatever it may be to other nations, since it is better for us to submit to the few ills we know (and especially as these few may be easily removed) than fly to others that we know not of,—why, then, we agree again.

I am far from thinking the revolution is settled; for I do not think their form of government is a practicable one; and, besides, they have by their proceedings irritated and made enemies of the three most powerful descriptions of men all over Europe,—kings, priests, and nobles. But this I think, that whatever attempts may be made to overthrow the present government, and with whatever success, there will be none made to restore the old one; and whatever trials by fire and sword France may undergo, that freedom in one form or other will be the issue.

On this curious and most interesting subject, I have corresponded with two very enlightened men of our country, one a professor at Edinburgh, the other at Glasgow. They are both a

good deal displeased with what has gone on of late. The first had, from the beginning, a distrust in the success of the revolution, as it now stands, *because there was not more blood spilt*. So sudden a change of sentiments he apprehended could not be trusted. Appearances as to unanimity went, probably, much beyond reality; and the actual sentiments of many of the giddy supporters of the present system might probably change, from the disappointment of their own inconsistent expectations. To secure such men in their present habits of thinking, he thought that war and bloodshed would be essential, by which their passions might be thoroughly mixed with their opinions, and an effectual mound be raised against an opposite current of thought.

For my part, what I chiefly doubt of them for, is the loss of Mirabeau. There fell a mighty and over-ruling genius! but who there is now to take his place, when danger and difficulty assail, I do not see. I read the Moniteur, or Gazette Nationale, every morning, which contains the debates of the National Assembly. Formerly, when difficulties assailed them, and uproar and confusion took place, Mirabeau arose, and "rode the whirlwind." Some of his speeches on those occasions are transcendently eloquent

and commanding; and, altogether, I conceive (whatever his morals might be) that, in respect to talents of every kind, Europe did not possess three such men. Now, there is a great falling off; every debate is a tumult; the vilest and grossest personalities pass; and, with every effort, it is scarcely possible to keep up one's respect for a body of men so noisy and outrageous.

But let us have done with politics.

I wrote the two first pages of this three weeks ago, immediately after receiving yours; and have been prevented by circumstances of one kind and another from finishing it. At present I wish you to hear from me, that I may have a chance of hearing from you again, and be informed of your motions. When may we expect you here? The players are come, and the town is very gay. Smart fellows like yourself are in request. You may flirt all day with the women, and pass the evenings with me as you used to do.

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My dear Captain,

I am your very affectionate Friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 35.

Liverpool, Feb. 19. 1792.

My dear Moore,

I look upon it as the most happy circumstance of my life, that I have always had friends that I could love, and, as one of the most honourable, that these friends have been men of firmer mould, whose attachment fed on something more substantial than forms, whose regard could subsist in absence and in silence, and manifest itself from time to time, amidst the seeming chillness of neglect. Of all my friends, no one has so frequently suggested this train of thought to me as yourself; nor is there one whose regard I count on with more confidence, or return with more sincerity.

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I see you know me and treat me like one, who trusts me. You do not reproach me with neglect, but write to me as if I were a more exact correspondent; and you write to me of yourself, and of your own feelings, with the openness of a kind and generous heart. Be assured I return your sentiments with interest.

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Since I received your letter, I have been thinking that a summer's cruise would do me good. I do not know that I would go with you though, even if you would invite me. Yes, I would go with *you*, but I do not know another acquaintance in your line that I would go with. I like to see friends on a footing of equality; and while a captain of a man-of-war is on his quarter-deck, you may as soon play the familiar with the prince on his throne. Therefore, I would choose to sail with a stranger, where there were no mutual claims, excepting, as I said, with yourself.

But if I went with you, I would make a point of never being in the way, of conforming strictly to rule in every thing, of observing the essence and even the forms of respect,—and all this silently. Then we should do. I am led to this subject by a most ridiculous circumstance that occurred not long ago. A landsman and a seaman, the one a merchant, the other master of a revenue cutter (both fools), had a most violent attachment to each other. The latter was sailing for Belfast, and the landsman offered or was invited to go with him. They sailed together, but met with rough weather, and were driven back. They quarrelled and fought with fists, and the poor landsman was sent on shore at Beaumaris,

to find his way home as well as he could: both his eyes closed up. I laughed immoderately at this story when I heard it, and cannot see the poor devil without laughing still.

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Let me speak of myself. — My situation is as usual, excepting that my acquaintances are fewer, and my friends, perhaps, more. We have a society that meets once a fortnight, that is very agreeable, to which three additional members have lately been added. We discuss politics, subjects of taste, science, &c. before supper, in a regular kind of conversation; and, after supper, we laugh and talk at large. * * *

I will give you a taste of our subjects. Last night we discussed, "The best mode of educating women;" the night before, "The poor laws, and the interests of the poor." Before that, "Whether one or two houses of legislation are preferable in the construction of a free government." Previous to that, "The influence of Rousseau's writings on the taste and morals;" and on the evening preceding, "Certain rules established by Dr. Franklin, about sixty years ago, on forming a literary club, which has terminated in the Philosophical Society of America,"—rules full of beauty, and of singular

simplicity. We have no written papers, unless any member chooses to write; but we have a president, and a sort of regular conversation, so that every man is heard to an end. This scheme was mine, and it succeeds wonderfully. I like it, because it admits of getting near the bottom of things, and it ensures fighting at close quarters, which I have a relish for. Most of the members you have seen. We are now fourteen in number. The effect of this exercise of the mind has been apparent on a late occasion. One or two of our members are engaged in what are called borough politics, and at a public meeting were wonderfully distinguished by their eloquence. They could stand up and talk ten or twenty minutes together to a thousand people, without nonsense or confusion, — a thing which astonished the audience, and made the mob shout. ——, a fellow that "is fit to stand by Cæsar," either in the forum or the field, gained the prize of eloquence.

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What is your father doing? Zeluco is an admirable work; the discrimination, the shading of character, is exquisite. His painting has no glare of colouring, no exaggeration of proportions. Every where there is displayed that happy combination of genius, observation, and

taste, which form the essence of those works that please in every age, and keep on the surface as they float down the stream of time.

* * * * * *

The taste of your father's composition, I mean of his style, is much wanted in this vitiated and corrupt age. Glare, show, antithesis, epigrammatic turns, rounded and sonorous periods, — these are the fruits of Johnson's example, and are easily imitated by those who can only ape his real excellencies. Gibbon, admirable as he is on the whole, has contributed to the same bad taste.

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(*The remainder of this letter has been lost.*)

No. 36.

Liverpool, November 29. 1792.

My dear Captain,

I seize the first leisure-hour to tell you how much I was rejoiced to hear you were again in England. Confound Newfoundland! its spruce-covered rocks, and its mist-covered hills! where the heart is as cold and the mind as sterile as the soil. Welcome back to England! to England, the land of action and of thought; full of ener-

gies of every kind, congenial to a generous, enlightened, and reflecting mind!

I am the more pleased that you are come back, because I did not expect you this winter; and now I begin to think that I may even see you here. What say you? Could not you come down for a fortnight about Christmas, and let us renew our old speculations. My grog is as good as ever — my welcome shall be more warm than ever. * * * *

You know how I am tied down to this little spot — little in comparison of the range one's thoughts take at present. But this I can say truly, that were I in your situation, and nothing but the trouble or fatigue of the journey stood in the way, I would not baulk my wish to see you, were the distance double. Enough — you will come if you can; if you cannot, there is no help.

By this time you have no doubt become acquainted with the events that have been passing during your absence — events beyond all comparison more singular and more important than any which history records. As to reflections on them, they are endless; but speculation on the news of the day is disturbed and confounded by that of to-morrow.

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In forming an estimate from the past, there is much cause for temper and candour. He whose character corresponds with Shakspeare's beautiful definition of man, "a being that looks before and after," will do well to moderate his passions, and purify his judgment, by raising his conceptions above the passing scene. When this is done, there is something to fear, but more, I think, to hope. * * * * As the influence of the eternal jealousies excited by the royal party (whether justly or not seems doubtful) wears away, the fanatics will want a handle to play on popular indignation, and the agitations of the multitude subside into repose. In the mean time, the heroism of the French soldiers will extend its influence, one would hope, to the agitators at home; not only by the safety it communicates to the nation, but by the influence of that liberal and generous spirit inseparable from true valour; which will operate by example, and spread by sympathy, so as to overawe the wicked, and to meliorate the minds of those only half depraved. I hope and am inclined to think it will be so, and that a new government will be erected on the foundations already laid, which may protect persons and property, without which, government is an empty name.

That such a government has not yet been formed does not surprise me. The earthquake in the moral world, which has cast down the fabrics of tyranny and superstition, has not done rocking, and till then, the fabrics reared at the moment must tremble also. But perhaps you will say, the new foundations are not good. I think otherwise. This point is of the last importance: let us say a word or two on it.

All governments are founded on opinion.

We submit, because the king is our master and we are his slaves, say the Easterns;—because he is our father and we are his children, say the Chinese and European monarchies;—because submission to law and government is useful, say the freemen of America, and many of those of England. Now, of these natural foundations, the last appears the strongest, provided experience had clearly marked out the objects to which this usefulness required government to extend, and time had produced habitual submission and respect. What France has wanted is not proper foundations or principles, but science or practical skill. It is one thing to understand the principles of mechanics; it is another to build a ship. The government they raised was ill-constructed, its parts ill-suited. The balance, as far as experience goes, is the true system, and

the proper division of powers. Republics or representative governments are as capable of these as our own constitution, two parts of which are hereditary. France will learn — she has got the true foundation, practice will tell her the edifice that is best.

I detest the spirit and character of the Jacobins; but great changes are never produced by amiable, polished, and refined characters. Superstition in the days of ignorance is a giant — truth a dwarf. But enthusiasm is the Hercules sent by Heaven to combat this monster; to attack a savage with a savage's strength. You detest Luther, and Calvin, and Knox; so do I. Heaven forbid I should live with such men! But they produced the Reformation, and that was a mighty thing. Finer minds would not have encountered the hazard. What did Erasmus in the days of Luther? What would Blair have done in the days of Knox? I cannot deny that coarser, and perhaps less principled, men than Lafayette and Rochefoucauld were necessary to complete the triumph of France, and that Pétion and Dumourier were what the season required. I put things together roughly, but you will comprehend me.

In regard to the extent to which the agitation may go, I should apprehend Europe will hardly

bound it. The combat will be renewed again and again between old superstition and young enthusiasm; and the issue will, I dare say, be generally favourable to the last. See Hume's *Essay on Superstition and Enthusiasm.* My notion is, that all governments will finally be reduced to the system of utility, and that in proportion as they now differ from this may the changes be expected to be. Judging in this way, our own government requires, I think, reformation only; and these reforms are not urgent, but might very well wait. They will, however, be precipitated, and may be attended with some confusion; but by no means with blows, as some idle people and silly women suppose.

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In these sentiments, and perhaps in others, my judgment is influenced, perhaps, by personal feelings. I cannot say I am apt to tremble at every little noise, or to dread that the blasts of civil commotion would blow me up by the roots. Others think differently from the same data; but they are men who have more to lose, or whose apprehensions are more tinctured with fear.

I hear there is a wonderful change in Scotland. The people there read Paine universally. In three months I should not be surprised to hear that the tree of liberty was planted at the

Cross of Edinburgh. At Dundee it was planted the other day; and some persons who opposed the people, and attempted to take it from them, were obliged to fly.

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The cause why Paine takes so much in Scotland is simply because the *bodies* can all read. Among the manufacturers of Manchester and Birmingham, not one in a hundred of whom know their alphabet, Paine has hitherto done little harm, though I am told he now begins to operate.

* * * * * *

I saw by the papers that your father was in Paris with Lord Lauderdale at the tumult of the 10th of August. I was afterwards informed he was safe in London. I was tormented with a desire of knowing something of the spring of such extraordinary events, and determined to write to him, that I might have an opportunity of insinuating a few questions under the disguise of reflections on the events in France. After I had written my letter, I had the modesty to suppress it.* But yet you may tell me, if you think proper, how far and wherein he differs from me. You are a prudent fellow; and as to me, I make a point of concealing every man's opinion but my own.

* See p. 163. where this letter to Dr. Moore is given.

Before I conclude, let me recommend a new work to you, Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Human Mind.* There is particularly a chapter on the application of first principles to politics, that I think of distinguished excellence. Excellent as many of the works are which this controversy has produced, I know nothing comparable to this.

By this time I hope you have given up that madman Burke, whose fanatic book has done more harm to his cause than any thing whatever. Lady O—— told me she met him the other day at Lord Inchiquin's. During dinner he was absent, dejected, and silent; after dinner, restless and irritable, starting from one subject to another, all his genius and his pleasantry fled. Alas, poor Edmund!

* * * * * *

Mrs. Currie is very well, and your old friend Willie. I want to teach him French, and would send him a year to France, or do any thing that would bend his organs of speech to the language. I have suffered more by not speaking French fluently, than by any other defect of my education.

Adieu, my dear friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 37.

Liverpool, March 5. 1793.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN,

* * * * *

It is the consequence of this quiet orderly system of ours, of which we are all so fond, that a man "fit to stand by Cæsar," may struggle out a long life in toils and perils, and at last perish obscurely; while in the confusion and crash of revolutions, all sorts of minds meet in fair conflict, and mount in proportion to their elasticity and force. It is this circumstance that gives a revolution *fairly on foot* such advantages. Talents almost always rise on what is called the rebellious side; and gentility, which always takes the other side, is no match for talents. All the gentlemen in England were with our unfortunate Charles; but from first to last, there was not, even by accident, (during the wars, I mean,) a single man of talents.* All the

* His correspondent, in reply to this letter, remarks, and with justice, that Dr. Currie had entirely overlooked the gallant Montrose, of whom (adds Captain Moore) Hume says, that "something of the *vast* and *unbounded* characterised his actions and deportment."

experienced soldiers also were with Charles, but there did not arise one good officer; while Fairfax, Cromwell, Ireton, Lambert, Monk, &c. assumed their natural pre-eminence on the side of the roundheads. And this leads to another conclusion, that *experience*, so much vaunted by common minds, is no match for talents. Cromwell was forty-four years of age, and Ireton a lawyer in long-established practice, before they either of them went into the army; and so of the rest. What is more strange, the same remark applies to *your* line of service. Blake, you know, was a middle-aged man before he entered the navy (forty, if I mistake not), and yet I suppose he stands unrivalled in naval fame.

In the American Revolution, though the Americans were a people morally and physically, in my judgment, inferior to the English, there was, perhaps, a superiority in the talents on their side. In the civil line this was unquestionable. The truth is, what talents the country had were all in action, and the best talents at the top, while the British were under the command of such men as chance or favour had placed at the head of the service. Had the talents in the British army, &c. ranged as much in their natural order as those of the Americans, we should not have had such a long journal of disgrace to

mourn over. It is better for us (I allow) as it was. Your *old-fashioned fellows* never attend to all this. It is *their* fashion to put rank in the place of merit; and when they relent a little from this, to relent in favour of experience only, seldom or never of talents.

The regent of France, Monsieur, appoints his brother Lieutenant-General, and his council of regency are all princes of the blood and peers of France. Such are the *precious old-fashioned fellows* that are to be opposed to the new fashions of the daring Dumourier, Kellermann, and Custine.

* * * * *

In every situation a certain degree of knowledge and experience is wanted. A general must understand the mechanism as well as discipline of an army; an admiral, of a fleet; but after this, the qualities that constitute a great general are not the gift of experience, but of nature. That coolness of mind, which keeps the judgment undisturbed in the midst of difficulty; that rapidity of apprehension, which seizes occasion as it flies; that faculty of combination, above all others, which is called *comprehension;* and that taste for grandeur and sublimity, which makes even danger lovely, and

elevating the mind above the storm, lifts it into an atmosphere that is tranquil and serene; — these are qualities that practice and experience in subordinate stations cannot give, *but may impair.*

There is a medium in every thing; a man may act too long in a subordinate capacity. Long habituated to direct himself by the judgment of others, he loses the independent strength of his mind; he falls into habits both of acting and thinking; he prefers things as they are, to the most evident improvements; he consults precedents on all occasions, common sense never; he becomes an *old-fashioned fellow.*

In the acquaintance which I have had with military men, I have seen such characters abound. I apprehend that there is something in both branches of the service, that leads to such habits of mind, and I caution you against it. The commanding officer of a regiment here is a countryman of ours, an old soldier — honest and brave, doubtless; — but not a Xenophon. We talk these matters over: I am obliged to express myself modestly. Sometimes I ask questions; sometimes I express my wonder. "Is it not strange, Colonel, that so many great officers should have appeared among men not regularly bred to the profession?" "I doubt the fact, Sir." I quote

instances in our own service. The Colonel denies them every one. I mention Washington, a mere land-surveyor; — he abuses him; Arnold, a mere farrier; — he gets warm. "Then there was Cromwell beat every one of the King's officers, Prince Rupert and all." The Colonel gets into a passion. "And this confounded *Demurrer*, as they call him, a man never more than a captain, or at best a colonel, of engineers; — there's the King of Prussia, the Duke of Brunswick, and Prince Hohenlohe, every man of them retreats before him, and when they *do* stand, you see he thrashes them." The Colonel can bear this no longer; he mutters oaths, fills up a bumper, spills one half of it, and wishes he had the rascal hand to fist. I testify my regret and surprise that such things should be, and turn the matter off the best that I am able. In my own mind, I console myself with thinking that the trade of a soldier is soon learnt, as far as it *is* a trade, and that in six months' service I should not be afraid to encounter this veteran myself, on equal terms. The elements of your service are more difficult to acquire; but they tell me that there is less room for genius and talents in command. How is this?

* * * *

You are going to fight these Sans Culottes. I

fear the war will be a fierce one. The issue of it, however, as far as it is naval, cannot be doubted. The French will soon be driven out of the seas. Individuals may acquire glory in this war, and I hope my gallant friend will reap it largely; but, unfortunately, the nation at large can acquire none. We attack a people already exhausted, or at least weakened, by a thousand internal difficulties, and by a resistance to a league of monarchs more formidable than the world ever saw. We come upon them in our full force to fill up the measure of their calamities. My notion is, that we shall succeed completely. Famine, I apprehend, will do the business; and we shall have the credit of reducing those by hunger, on whom the German bayonets could make no impression.

We must be contented to look for a recompense for the present evils of this war, in the advantages which it is likely to procure to our future interest. Doubtless, these are striking. The German dominion will again be extended over Brabant; the Austrian and Prussian armies again invade France, but under happier auspices. Famine and pestilence will wither the nerves that danger could not appal. The Prussian eagles will wave on the ramparts of Paris, and the pretended philosophers, the enemies of priests and kings, expiate their impiety and presumption

with their lives. Poland divided, and France subdued, how glorious will be the triumph! From Archangel to Gibraltar, there will be one compact league of sovereign power, before which the earth shall tremble. Happy England, how great will then be thy prosperity! how secure thy blessings!

In the mean time, I do not feel as if the soil would suit *me*. I do not think I shall find the air easily breathed in. These trophies of our "Heaven-born" minister will keep me from rest. What part may become me I know not. Perhaps I may try to find a shelter in the woods of America. Perhaps — there is no end to conjecture.

On the other hand, I am aware (however unlikely) that even with the aid of England, the confederate arms may not succeed against France; and such is the nature of the contest, that if France be not subdued, she triumphs.

What will the Emperor and the King of Prussia say when they return home (if such should be the issue) baffled and defeated? What will the Duke of York say? What account will our ministry and our House of Commons give of the sums expended, the manufactures ruined, and the commerce destroyed? I protest I cannot say. The world is full of strange events, and

while I see plainly that a most awful drama is performing, I will not presume to anticipate the winding up.

In the changes of human affairs, I hope our friendship will survive, and that we shall play whatever parts may be assigned us with fidelity and honour.

I am always yours most affectionately,

J. CURRIE.

P. S. I have some doubts whether it is friendly in me to write to you in the manner I have done. I would not have you to think we differ more than we do.

There are prodigious difficulties in forming a decision, even to a by-stander like me: because, from the very nature of man, the subjects at issue carry the parties more and more into extremes; and the scales of fate are balanced by general despotism on the one hand, and universal anarchy on the other. I believe the balance *was* in our hands. It is so no longer.

You see I hold the present principles of the French, if indeed they can be said to have any, in abhorrence equal to yours. I abhor the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian principles equally: and I cannot but reflect that anarchy is the child of a day, but despotism lasts for ages.

The source of the French strength (the credit of their assignats) is about to fail. Food is likely to fail them also. In a few months (I incline to believe) they will be low enough. We might have saved the original constitution, the king, Lafayette (lately it is said executed at Berlin), and the Feuillans, by preventing the invasion of France. Time would have strengthened regular government, in honest hands; time would have brought more strength into their constitution itself, and formed it more into the English model. Alas! alas! what *has* followed? What may yet follow?

In the mean time, we must all do our duty in our respective stations, and cling by the blessings we enjoy. The best news I wish to hear of you is, that you have taken a French frigate of superior force, the next best, a French St. Domingo man. I have some little doubt whether honour or profit should come first. Since you must fight, I wish you both.

No. 38.

Liverpool, Sept. 3. 1795.

My dear Captain,

* * * * * *

You will enquire why I am so silent, if this be the state of my mind. If I were sure this letter would reach you in safety, I would enter on this subject with you at large. In general, however, I may observe, that I do not care to write to you on the subjects that have usually formed the principal points of our correspondence, and that I for some time had a little doubt whether it was proper for me to write to you at all. The times are very singular. Private correspondence has not been held sacred. The praises of Charles Grey, I have heard, were not of service to a captain in the navy, and I could suppose that he might not be benefited by corresponding with the reputed Jasper Wilson.

I believe that this spirit of insolence, bigotry, and malice decays; and that spies and informers are no longer in such a state of activity. But I feel delicately on a subject like this, and the very thought or suspicion, however unfounded, that

my correspondence might injure my friend, had something poisonous in its influence. It benumbed my exertions, and froze my impulses. Enough! Do not say much on this in your reply, if you at all notice it.

You will wish to know how I have gone on; whether, for instance, I have suffered in my friendships or my practice by the spirit of the times. In my friendships, strictly speaking, I have not. All my *friends*, and indeed almost all the enlightened men I know, (yourself and two or three others excepted,) are of my way of thinking. In my practice I have suffered a little, perhaps, but not sufficiently to give me any uneasiness; not sufficiently to diminish it on the whole. On the contrary, I am getting this year rather more than I ever did. I have, however, sacrificed a good deal to this same practice. It has kept me silent, not as to conversation, for I have not concealed my thoughts; but as to the public, which I have been a thousand times tempted to address once more, in defiance of every consideration of prudence.

The truth is, that, like one of the Hebrew prophets, I feel the spirit within me, and see, or think I see, the records of futurity. I am tempted to utter a warning voice that would save no man, and that would ruin myself.

* * * * * *

Here has been a little fellow of the name of Hamilton* from India with us, whom I have taken to mightily. He tells me that he was at school with you and your brother James, whom he knows very well. He is an enlightened, learned, modest, and unaffected man. You may tell me what sort of a boy he was at school, for that throws much light on the man's character.

* * * * * *

Here I must stop for the present, I will be a better correspondent in future. Let me know that you receive this safe, and tell me if the contents please you.

Farewell, my dear Graham. Fortune and honour attend you!

Yours very affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

P. S. I have been reading your Father's two volumes on the French Revolution, which I think excellent.

* Afterwards Professor at the East India College, at Haileybury.

No. 39.

To Dr. Moore, London.

(Among his father's papers, the Editor found the following letter without a date, endorsed, "Intended letter to Dr. Moore," which is probably that alluded to in one of the preceding letters to Captain Moore. * *If so, it must have been written before the end of November,* 1792. *Of its existence that gallant officer will be for the first time aware, on perusing these pages.)*

DEAR SIR,

Not having heard of your son Captain Moore's arrival in America, I use the freedom of enquiring after him from you.

When I laid the paper before me, it was my intention to write to him; but not knowing how to address him, this gives me something between an occasion and a pretence to write to you. Though I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with you, yet I do not affect to introduce myself as one entirely unknown. I trust to the propensity of my gallant friend to talk of those he regards, for some mention of my name in your family, and indeed for much more honourable mention than I deserve. Though he

* See p. 149.

were not your son, I should apprehend his good opinion of me would be some recommendation to you of my character; for setting aside the mistake which I am bound to suppose he has made in my own instance, I protest I do not know a better judge of men, or one whose mind is more sound and clear. Many are the hours we have spent together in Liverpool, at a very interesting period of his life, and much have I been delighted with the rectitude and the open ingenuousness of his sentiments, with the simplicity and the interest of his manners, and with the happy union which he discovered of a strong understanding, an ardent imagination, and a feeling heart. You perhaps know that we have corresponded together, and sometimes discussed in this way the French Revolution, and its extraordinary events. On this subject, which has called forth the sympathies of the bluntest minds, we have had just enough of difference of opinion to make a comparison of our sentiments interesting, without such a degree of difference as to make opposition disagreeable. The late extraordinary events in France, and the undisguised exhibition of a new republic, such as the world never saw, provoke me to a communication of thought on the singular crisis that is before us, and on the prospects to come. I intended writ-

ing to him, and you see how it happens that my letter is to you.

I am one of those who saw the opening of the Revolution with such extraordinary pleasure, that I have not been able to detach my wishes from the French cause for any length of time, in spite of the many disadvantages under which it has often appeared. The book of Mr. Burke produced no effect on me, but that of a violent headache, which three hundred and fifty pages of bitter and unmixed invective might well enough be supposed to occasion. The transactions of the 10th of August last shook me much; and the bloody proscriptions which followed, detached me entirely. The flight of Lafayette, Liancourt, and Lameth; the massacre of the prisoners; and, above all, the murder of Rochefoucauld, whose bloody tomb (to use an expression of the emigrant Bourbons) I yet bathe with my tears, shook me at the time with the strongest horror, and I never expected that any thing out of my own family and country could have so deeply disturbed my peace. But the rapid and momentous events which followed (for we live at a time when weeks are years) have again called me to the scene of action; and, like many other good Feuillans, being unable to go over to the Prussians, I find myself again in the ranks of France. Now, I want to be

persuaded that I am right in this, on my original principles; and, to be ingenuous, I long for a few observations on the subject from one, who, I understand, has looked at this scene lately, and who to an unprejudiced judgment adds an experienced eye. I know there are times when the more prudent part is to be silent. But besides that I live remote from the great world, I have a tolerable share of prudence, and can conceal the sentiments of others on such a subject much better than my own.

The post of to-day brings the account of something like a negotiation.

LETTERS TO MRS. GREG,

MANCHESTER.

FROM 1790 TO 1801.

Nos. 40. TO 48.

Test and Corporation Acts. — Death of Miss Cropper.* — On Education. — On Truth-speaking (*Note.*) — Reflections on Death. — On Ireland. — On Composition.—Mungo Park.

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* A Letter on this subject to Miss Kennedy, which it appeared desirable to insert here, is included in this series.

No. 40.

To Mrs. Greg, Manchester.

Liverpool, January 16. 1790.

My dear Mrs. Greg,

* * * * * * *

By the Liverpool papers you will see that we are going to meet on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts. What sort of meeting it will be, God knows. Whether I may grow warm in the progress of the business, I do not know; but at present I am but *lukewarm*. There is such a degree of hatred, malice, and uncharitableness generated in the discussion of all party questions, that I could be well contented to have nothing to do with them. I believe, however, that I shall be forced more or less forward, though little, I fear, to my own credit or satisfaction. It is my misfortune that I do not entirely approve of the conduct and principles of any sect; and, therefore, I can take part in the present question only in so far as it is connected with the principle of universal toleration. But this principle has not been sufficiently avowed on the present occasion; and many, who wish for their own hands untied, are decidedly against

several on earth that I sincerely love, and some few still that I hope have a regard for me, I should not care how soon my eyes were closed in death. Thinking thus, you may guess what I feel on my late loss, and how I think of those friends that still remain. I was not altogether unprepared for this stroke, but less at the time it happened than perhaps at any time for three years before. You must send me all the advice you can, for I want it very much. Let your confidence towards me be equal to your kindness. This letter is not fit for any eye but your own. Farewell, my dear friend.

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 42.

To Mrs. Greg, Manchester.

Liverpool, April 10. 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

A short time ago, I wrote to Miss Kennedy in much disorder of spirit. At present I can think with much more calmness, and express myself with much more ease. The influence of time, of continual occupations, but more espe-

cially of study, has alleviated my feelings, on a loss which I shall never cease to lament, and which I shall never be able to repair. Such a friend is not to be met with twice in the narrow circle of an individual society, or in the short limits of human life. Such judgment, such generosity and tenderness, such delicacy of heart and devotion of friendship, are rarely seen on earth, which does not indeed seem worthy of them. That eternal Being who brought them into existence, has not, we will anxiously hope, resolved them into dust; but preserved them in a brighter world, the great receptacle of virtuous minds. I cannot express to you the chasm in my thoughts and feelings which Miss Cropper's death has produced.

* * * * *

J. C.

No. 43.

Liverpool, June 21. 1791.

My dear Friend,

* * * * * * * *

I read your letter twice over before I could convince myself that you had nothing to say

These two points carried, and I believe in my conscience they may be easily carried, if they are not complicated with others, you have little less to do than to feed the curiosity, as it rises, with knowledge, taking care to give it the proper quantity, and no more; to direct the affections, as they kindle, to their proper objects; gradually to teach self-restraint and voluntary exertion; and, *finally* (observe this), to prune the manners into their proper form. * * * Girls, I believe, may be more speedily brought into form than boys, and some boys than others: dispositions ought to be studied, *and all interference considered as a necessary evil.*

Here is my system: let me know what you

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from those which are chiefly to be considered as the offspring of folly. But I say, speak the truth, when you do speak, in every case. On this side you cannot err; if you deviate in the contrary direction, your path is unsafe. Hidden snares beset you, toils and quicksands surround you, darkness may overtake you, and the precipice of vice is before you. *Let not even tenderness for a fellow-creature lead you astray. Conceal his misfortunes and prevent his sorrows, if it be expedient; but if you must speak, let it be the words of truth, and leave the consequences to the Disposer of events.* If I should live to see my little William understand and practise this precept in its full extent, I shall be a very happy man. To speak truth is, in my opinion, in its essence and consequences, the height of wisdom, and the sum of virtue."

think of it. I am often surprised to see with how much confusion and absurdity even sensible people think on these points. A very well-informed mother told me the other day, that she thought the first thing that ought to be taught children was to be affectionate! Affections may be directed, nay, strengthened; but to implant them where they are not, is an arrogant and foolish attempt. But this is not so bad as the system adopted by some sensible men, of reducing children into a state of universal and implicit submission — into the condition of mere machines. I think of so blind and so brutal a system with abhorrence.

In short, my notion of education in its earlier parts is like my idea of a national government: that it should be chiefly negative or preventive, so to speak, extending to as small an abridgment of liberty as possible, but absolute on the points on which it interferes; and that the faults attending it in general are, like the faults in governments in general, an interference where no interference is required, on a number of foolish points, to the injury of the human faculties, and to the neglect of those points which are essential. The analogy will not hold good as to the more advanced parts of education, because its objects then are to teach and instruct; whereas

those of government should be confined, in my judgment, almost entirely to restraint.

And now, my excellent friend, I have returned you page for page, in hopes that my letter may afford you some amusement, and, in this way, do you some good, whatever effect my prescriptions may have. With kind respects to Mr. Greg, and love to Miss Kennedy,

I am always,

Your most affectionate and faithful friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 44.

Liverpool, August 17. 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

I am happy you arrived safely at the end of your journey, and that you have met so much to admire and to love at Belfast. When an adventure terminates happily, the more vicissitudes of hope and fear, enjoyment and suffering, in the course of it, the better. What was hardship when present, becomes, in such a case, enjoyment on recollection. Between Port Patrick and Donaghadee the storm was terrible; it is absolutely interesting and agreeable, when related on the shore. Besides the interest of all scenes of grandeur in themselves, there is something

in being present to danger, which raises us in our own esteem.

* * * * *

The particulars you give me of the Irish character correspond with my own observations. These northern Irish, however, are the flower of the nation, and may compare, as far as I can learn, with any people of any country. The southern Irish are a very different race; though they will, no doubt, improve, now that their shackles are struck off.

As far as I have seen of the Irish nation, they are a people of strong sensibilities. In the language of Dr. Darwin, their sensations are strong in themselves, and strong in proportion to their volitions. They are impressible in a high degree; but their self-command is not equal to their impressibility. Belfast and the North excepted, Ireland is, I presume, less cultivated both in its soil and its inhabitants than England. But England is a man, and *past the middle age;* Ireland is a youth, and perhaps only a boy.

* * * * *

We have nothing very new here in our domestic situation. We grow more and more tired of the war, and with more and more reason.

In the last seven or eight months, Liverpool

has lost fifty-eight sail of square-rigged vessels, amounting to eighteen thousand tons of shipping! The underwriters here and at Lloyd's are the greatest sufferers; and so much enraged are they, that a meeting in London is talked of for the purpose of addressing the King to displace Lord Chatham.

In the mean time the post of to-day brings a rumour which is not generally credited, but which I am inclined to believe, of the fall of Robespierre and his party.

* * * * *

Adieu. Your affectionate friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 45.

Liverpool, February 16. 1795.
Sunday evening.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

I am such a Martha, busy about so many things, and my correspondence is at the present moment so multifarious and so discordant, that I absolutely forget to-day what I wrote yesterday.

One thing I did this morning, which I shall remember for some time — I witnessed the last

melancholy duties performed to A——r H——d. I saw the good old man descend quietly into his silent vault, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." One might reflect on this subject for many pages. What so common as death? yet what so deeply interesting?

Shall I tell you how my mind was employed as I looked after him into the grave? There he lay in a leaden coffin fifteen feet under ground. He occupied the first floor in this hall of death; his wife and sons are to fill the upper stories. "How," thought I, "my excellent old friend, are thou to heave off this immense load from thy now cold, but once warm bosom, when the springs of life are again to flow, and the grave to give up its dead? But the power that gave life, and the power that must restore it, when it is restored, will make the passage from thy vault easy. He that has fixed in his mind that the dead shall rise, will find no difficulty in their ascent from the dust."

Settling this point in my mind, I began to reflect that this venerable patriarch occupied his proper place in the vault where he lay. He was the oldest of his family, and he had the post of honour: he entered first into the house of death. He did not find his place pre-occupied by his

children; they yet survive him, and will be restored to him in the course of time, and perhaps in the order of nature!

Passing from personal to more general feelings, I began to reflect with how many fathers the order of nature is at this wasteful period reversed. Alas! the definition of war given by Thales the Milesian is too true; — "In peace the sons bury their fathers; in war the fathers bury their sons."

* * * * *

If you are not tired of my melancholy musings, perhaps you will find an opportunity of making me a return in kind.

* * * * *

Your affectionate friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 46.

Liverpool, November 14. 1797.

MY DEAR MRS. GREG,

* * * * *

I have been dining with your husband and Mr. Warre at Mr. Ewart's, and they are coming to sup here. I have a short interval even after seeing several patients, and I devote it to you.

When your sister pants for the words of the wise, as the hart for water, she does not, I hope, refer to me. True, I might be flattered by such a compliment; but the melancholy nature of my forebodings would give her a degree of pain that I should be sorry to communicate to her, whatever self-complacency her opinion of my wisdom might awaken.

Alas, for poor Ireland! her country. Look at its geography, and see the indelible character of its fate. There are occasionally gleams of humanity and justice in the conduct of nations towards each other: but, on the whole, passion, not interest, is the principle of action; and force, not justice, the means it employs.

Look at Ireland — an inferior island in point of extent, in the neighbourhood of a larger one. What is the consequence? The inhabitants of the larger island, instigated by ambition and avarice, subject her by brutal force; and founding their empire upon injustice, of necessity maintain it by injustice.

Is this strange? Not at all: the geography of the terraqueous globe, as you revolve it before you, will point out a similar fate as the lot of every country similarly situated. The advantage of particular situations has enabled nations, comparatively small, to maintain their inde-

pendence. Scotland was united under one head, and presented her poverty and her mountains as barriers of defence: yet she was subject to eternal attack; and while she maintained her independence, she lost a fourth part of her population by the sword. Portugal, surrounded by her impenetrable mountains, and supported by an English fleet, has borne up hitherto against the force of Spain; and Switzerland, resting on her republican governments, on the top of her eternal hills, has sustained her independence in the centre of hostile Europe.

But Ireland, originally divided into small dynasties like all the rest of Europe, was conquered, before, in the progress of civilisation, these dynasties had united into one; and a thousand other causes of disunion having occurred, these have been kept up as a means of keeping her under, according to the universal maxims of political power. The ruling faction that governs Ireland under the English minister, was justly alarmed at the profound system that was to form a universal union, on a new basis of natural right, upon which its oblique institutions could not have rested for a moment; and the exertions it makes to dissolve this union are the strong and desperate efforts of self-preservation.

Are we to conclude that the Irish rulers are

wicked in this conduct? Certainly, in the code of pure morality; but it is deeply to be lamented that they act on the same principles that have, almost without a single exception, governed all combinations of men in possession of power. Ireland is kept under by the sword, and by the sword only can her bonds be cut asunder; and I repeat it again, that in the present aspect of affairs I see little chance that the attempt will be made, and none at all that, if made, it will be successful. It is not by its single efforts that the fate of Ireland will be decided; it is in the dreadful contest which is *commencing* between England and France that its history and fortunes are involved. Ireland is an open and a fruitful country. It is in possession of England; and all that is leading and powerful in it, all that has been accustomed to independent action, is leagued with England to keep it down.

Who shall cry, "To your tents, O Israel?" Where are the arms, the fastnesses, the impenetrable mountains — where the united and unconquerable will — that stand in the place of system, discipline, and skill? Where is the wilderness in which the young lion shall feed on manna, and range unmolested till his limbs expand and his strength invigorates, and he bursts on his enemies in the fulness of his powers?

You do me injustice, when you doubt my sympathy in the sufferings of Ireland. "Am not I a man, and a brother?" Besides, I have always contended that, through all the haze of perverted education, the Irish character was of the finest materials; and always contended, too, that Ireland has, from the earliest periods of modern history, had fouler play than any nation on earth. I maintained these points the other day in a large company, against an Irishman and an officer, with a vehemence that alarmed my friends, and with a success that surprised myself. But it is safe to contend with an Irishman in favour of Ireland.

But what to wish or hope for Ireland I know not; I cannot wish success to France, in the new contest she is commencing with England. Miserable as our councils have been, I must be on the side of my country. The present government of France is decidedly a usurpation, and is returning on us the injustice which, in 1793, the French nation received.

It is my opinion that we shall suffer great calamities. Prosperity has made us hard-hearted: adversity will teach us sympathy; and at some happy moment a federal union between the two islands may be formed on the basis of justice, and give to the "queen of the waves" the full

scope of her genius, and the free enjoyment of her blessings.

But I see this through the mist of time, and far remote in the vale of years.

At the present moment, the times become more and more serious — the hours, as they fleet away, assume a melancholy hue. If the still and stagnating atmosphere portend a hurricane — if the dark and gathering clouds are to burst upon us — may indulgent Providence bear us up under the whirlwind, and conduct us in safety through the storm!

Accept these few hurried remarks as a token of my respect for Miss Greg, and of my regard for you.

I enclose you a subscription-paper for the widow and children of Burns. I shall correct the proofs, and write the biography; which will be a great amusement, and will divert me from more serious things. I am ashamed to ask you to subscribe: yet I do ask you; and I desire you to ask any other person that you think would subscribe willingly.

Adieu, my dear friend!

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 47.

Liverpool, March 27. 1800.

* * * * *

To the latter part of your letter, first —

I see no injury you can do yourself by publishing — no injury, I mean, to the reputation of your understanding; and certainly you can receive none, but the contrary, to your character for benevolence.*

In respect to your prefatory matter, be as short and as clear as you can. Do not deprecate or apologise too much: for the world into which you are going, will not enter much into your feelings; and much prefatory matter, which in you would spring from mere timidity, might to the million appear like self-importance.

* * * * *

Let me request of you to write your own preface. Do not hesitate in your first composition: let your pen move glibly over the paper; and when you have said all that you mean to say, try

* This passage relates to a little publication, by Mrs. Greg, which first appeared under the title of "A Collection of Proverbs, Maxims, Observations, &c.," but in the second Edition was called, "The Moralist."

in how many fewer words, and even letters, you can say it. This is a simple receipt for concentrating diffuseness, languor, and pomposity (of which, however, you cannot be accused), into simplicity, energy, and conciseness.

In correspondence a thought flows easily, because we do not care much how it flows. And when it is once down on paper, it is easy to correct and enlarge it into all we require. But the pain of giving birth to a thought full-grown and elegantly attired is very considerable.

The skull of Jupiter, you will remember, was obliged to be fractured, when Minerva was to issue from it a perfect goddess, completely armed.

* * * * *

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 48.

Liverpool, January 15. 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have so many things to write to you, that I know not how to begin. Come over and let us talk; for in spite of your observations to the contrary, conversation between friends is better than writing; and the time is fast approaching when this will be verified. I wonder what is to

come next. * * * * * I wish I could get these subjects out of my head; — for, what purpose do thought and prophecy answer? In my musings, and in my melancholy, I am harassed with visions that appal my senses.

How do you think I employ myself at present when I can steal a few minutes to myself? I read Geddes's Translation of the Bible, and Logan's Sermons; but after I have perused a few sentences, the tide of thought breaks in upon my attention. I throw myself back on my couch, listen to the rain beating on my window, and, as the noise of carriages rolling over the pavement assails me, I wish myself in some wilderness, listening to the rushing gale, or the lonely stream, as better suited to the temper of my mind.

I have, however, been much amused by Mungo Park, the African traveller. He dined with me two days ago. He would interest you greatly. He is a very simple and most unaffected being, approaching in manners to a peasant, but a naturalist and a scholar, with a bold heart and a most correct understanding. Poor fellow! he is ill qualified to struggle with the world, and this is his destiny.

* * * * * * *

Yours very faithfully,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 49.

To Mrs. Currie, Waterford.

Liverpool, May 14, 1790.

My dear Lucy,

* * * * *

Your account of the duel is, indeed, very melancholy. Poor —— is gone to his long account but ill-prepared for his final reckoning! He seems to have set his life on a desperate cast, where even success could have purchased nothing but dishonour.

Much as I admire the gallant spirit of the Irish, I have always lamented their foolish promptitude in affairs of this kind. The point of honour among them is high, while the state of manners is comparatively unrefined. Hence quarrels must arise; and if they do arise, they must often prove fatal. In former times, in the Highlands of Scotland, a chieftain, when he sat down to table, drew his sword or his dagger, and laid it by his plate. If any man offered him offence, his weapon was ready to avenge him; and as every man was equally prepared, and the spirits of all were highly jealous and irritable, the least breath of passion was apt to kindle into

a flame, and their feasts were frequently polluted with blood. Civilisation has introduced milder manners, but a taint of the feudal spirit remains, and the gentlemen there are still too ready to appeal to the sword.

Something of this kind seems to exist in Ireland in a still stronger degree. In England it is going out fast: at this moment, it is disgraceful for a man of any seriousness of character to be engaged in a private quarrel; the number of rencontres is, of course, few: and when in Ireland the character of a duellist shall be held in equal disrepute, we shall seldomer hear of these fierce and fatal disputes.

After all, there are situations ——— but it is time to have done with the subject. * *

* * * *

* * * *

The children are very well. William is very much asked out; but I hold back as much as I can, for I do not think that children's visitings do any good. A child on a visit is in an unnatural state: either it will break through the bounds of decorum, and be noisy and troublesome, or it must be very prim and well bred, which, to a lively and active mind, is very irksome. * * * *

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* * * *

* * * There is no news, excepting that Colonel Tarleton is going as a volunteer on board the fleet, and hence that it is hoped there will be no contest at the election. The report of a war thickens: still I do not think there will be one. If there should be a war, Spain risks every thing, and can gain nothing. But the Spanish king is proud and foolish, and so the world must be deluged with blood. Be this as it may, kings and nations are but instruments in the hand of an over-ruling Providence, and by their passions and prejudices become the means of accomplishing its great designs. A war undertaken about a barren spot, in the most remote corner of the earth, may issue in the destruction of the Spanish empire in America. The double chain of superstition and oppression, so long spread over the fairest regions of the globe, may be burst asunder; and the slaves of kings and priests, casting off their fetters, step forth, erect and self-balanced, the firm and fearless creatures which God and nature designed them!

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No. 50.

To Mrs. Currie, Ince, near Wigan.

Liverpool, June, 1796.

My dear Lucy,

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* * * * * *

* * Last night, being alone and a little disconsolate, I thought I might amuse myself with a sight of Mrs. Siddons. She played Jane Shore. The house was not full, nor indeed half full. Mrs. Ward played Alicia; Aikin, Shore; and Hargraves, Hastings. I amused myself with anatomising Mrs. Siddons' form and acting; and as the play gave me no disturbance, I did this at my ease. I remarked that though not entirely out of powder, she was nearly so: her hair dressed very full on her brow, and down to her eyes. It was tucked up behind, but not so short as many of our ladies wear theirs.

She had her cestus in the natural position; that is, about an inch lower than yours. Her dress was matronly and correct.

I observed that, although rather too bulky, she is a very fine-made woman. The setting-on of her head, the fall of her shoulders, the turn of

her arm and fore-arm and hand, are all perfect. Her gesture and deportment are without a fault.

Her acting is more correct, but less spirited than formerly. I could find nothing strained, affected, or ostentatious. Her movements were in exact unison with her sensations; and voice, gesture, and countenance were in perfect harmony. The part admits of little sublimity, and she did not introduce the sublime (as I have sometimes seen her do) to show her unrivalled excellence. She rather played under than over her part, as the phrase is, and managed her voice so as to raise its tones little above the level of conversation. Persons who did not watch her, did not perceive this; for such is the astonishing force of her countenance and attitude, that in the scene with Richard (the only one that admits of great force,) with an exertion of voice not greater than you are often obliged to employ in correcting your son or husband, she conveyed the utmost energy of impression!

After all, I thought nothing of Jane Shore. I had not, therefore, the least disposition to weep over her sorrows; I came out of the theatre as cool as I went into it. I shall not go again to please myself; but I have been thinking I must go to give you some account of her performance of Belvidera on Friday. * *

* * * * * *

of Language. — Chief Practical Value of. — Anecdote of Fox and Horne Tooke. — St. Domingo. — Farther Observations on Metaphysical Studies. — Comparison between Metaphysics and Mathematics. — Conversational Powers. — Three Individuals possessed of these in an uncommon Degree. — On his Determination to settle at Bath.

No. 51.

To W. W. Currie, aged Twelve Years.

Liverpool, April 23. 1796.

My dear Wallace,

I was much pleased with your letter, because it showed that you thought of me when absent, and considered how you might please me; and this is a kind of attention that all men, women, and children like. I intended to have written to you by Wednesday's post, or cart, I believe I should say; but that day I was obliged to go into the country, and so I lost the opportunity.

I am very glad you like Homer and Cicero,—they are the two great classics of ancient days; the one the first of the Greeks, the other of the Latins. To understand Homer perfectly is to be truly learned; and I hope you will one day be able to take up the book for pleasure, and read it over your tea, as Mr. Shepherd perhaps does, and as I see Mr. Wm. Clarke * doing fre-

[illegible] friend of Mr. Roscoe, and honourably [illegible] to *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. xvi.

quently. Homer gives, I think, too attractive a picture of the heroic character. It was but a foolish thing for the Greeks to go into Asia and fight the Trojans for ten years, because Paris ran away with Helen. Life is but short at the best, and it is a sad thing to see, in all ages of the world, how men have contrived to make it shorter, by killing each other with swords, and spears, and guns, and bayonets. It is true, when a man's country is in danger, nothing is more honourable than to arm for its defence. When, in after-ages, the young men of Greece turned out to meet the invading Persians at Marathon, Salamis, and Platea, nothing could be more noble than their principle, or more glorious than their conduct. But their cause was far better than their forefathers' when they fought under the walls of Troy, as you will easily see. However, you may, if you please, explain the difference to me.

I have been reading Mr. Gibbon's history of his own life. He was one of the most learned men in Europe, and a celebrated historian. He wrote the History of the Roman Empire, from the period of its highest rise under Nerva and Trajan, to its decline and fall, at the time of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. This is a period of 1300 years, I believe, and it connects

ancient with modern history. You will read this book when you become a man, for it would not be understood by you at present. I observe that Mr. Gibbon, though he was afterwards so learned, had not in early life half the advantages that you boys have at Mr. Shepherd's. He seems to have taught himself in a great measure; and he used to get up at four and five in the morning to study Greek and French. He lived from sixteen to twenty-one at Lausanne, in Switzerland; a beautiful spot among the mountains, which perhaps you may one day see.

What charming weather! We long to be in the country. Let me hear from you by the next post or cart.

I am, my dear Wallace,
Your affectionate Father,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 52.

To the same, aged Twelve Years and a half.

(Supposed) October, 1796.

My dear Wallace,

I received your letter of Friday this morning, and I read it with a good deal of pleasure. The writing is, on the whole, very much better than usual, and the spelling and grammar are correct. In time you will make an agreeable and pleasant sort of a correspondent.

I am glad you like Homer: all men of learning read and study him. He was a man of a great soul; and it is doubted whether the world ever produced so sublime a poet. They say he was a poor blind man, that wandered about the islands in the Ægean Sea, singing or repeating his verses; though after his death seven Greek cities contended for the honour of his birth, and his fame has spread throughout the world. But a great man is seldom or never fairly rated by his contemporaries, and a *very great man* does not always reach the height of his reputation till a century or two after he is dead.

I do not wonder you find the Satires of Horace difficult — more difficult than the Odes.

The Satires are very abrupt, and full of quick turns, which it requires some time to get acquainted with. They are not perhaps so pleasing or so poetical as the Odes; but they are generally supposed to be full of good sense, and to show a great acquaintance with life and manners. By and by, you will make them out more easily.

Mr. W. Smyth told me he saw you on Tuesday. He stayed here last night. He is to be with us next Saturday, and says he intends to examine you, so that I hope you will not commit any fault that may make Mr. Shepherd judge it proper to detain you. You may bring any of your exercises with you that you have at hand, that we may look them over.

No. 53.

To the same, aged Thirteen Years.

March 17. 1797.

My dear Shylock*,

If it is a long time since I wrote to you, that is not my fault, but rather my misfortune. My

* The Editor had acted this part in a juvenile play.

time is so much occupied, as you know, that though I can often think of my friends, and sometimes talk with them, I can seldom do more. I believe I think of you fully as often as any one thing or person in this world; and the subject, though it gives me some anxiety, gives me still more satisfaction. I am anxious when I reflect on the hazards you must run, and the chances of fortune that you must sustain. Toil and exertion are your lot as well as your father's, and I wish you to be prepared in body and mind to meet your destination. You will start in the world with more advantages of friends, as well as of property, than I did; for my advantages of this description were very few. Under all my difficulties, however, I used to be supported by a maxim instilled into me by my father — that no one ought to sink in his own opinion because he is inferior to others in the goods of fortune, which are not in his power; but that vice, profligacy, or idleness, are the only real grounds of self-abasement. If a man has but little, let him use the faculties that God has given him: let him learn to do with little; let him avoid habits of expense and indulgence, and ground his competition with others, not on show or profusion, but on talents and virtue.

To form right opinions on this subject is of the utmost importance.

You are soon going among strangers. Never put yourself off, or allow yourself to be put off, for a boy of more consequence in the world than you are: because this may raise expectations of your going to expense beyond what is right for you to go to; and when such expectations are formed, it is very mortifying to disappoint them. This mortification has led many a one astray; and it arises from a want of manly fortitude in the first instance to avow one's true situation.

I will tell you a story of myself, which, though it happened when I was a few months older than you, I remember as fresh as yesterday.

At the time I speak of, my father sent me to Dumfries school, and I was boarded, as you are now, with the master. The boys, I found, used many of them to brag of the consequence, and particularly of the riches, of their fathers, and to speak of the large sums allowed them for pocket money. As to myself, I had all the indulgence in this respect necessary, but very much less than they talked of. I said nothing on the subject. Soon after this, one of the lads, who was the greatest boaster of them all, observed me with some shillings in my hand. They had been given me to buy a new hat (for

my father had great confidence in me), and I had taken them inadvertently out of my pocket to look at them. This boy whispered among the others that Currie, though he said nothing about it, had more pocket-money than any of them; and this, I found, gave me, as a stranger, consequence among them. I delayed buying the hat; and though I never said the money was my own, I did not deny it: neither did I spend it.

A few days after this, the boy I speak of came to me, and in a careless and confident way asked me to lend him five shillings, promising to return it when he got his quarter's allowance, which would be in a few days. He knew I had the money, and it seemed niggardly to refuse him, especially as he supposed it was my own pocket money; so I gave it to him. But I could never get it from him: and he died some years afterwards in my debt. I might have told my father the whole truth, but it was mortifying; so I resolved to do with my old hat, which was perfectly shabby; and when I went into company, an elder boy, to whom I confessed my situation, used to lend me his; and all the boys in the school soon knew the whole story, so my mortification was double and treble. However, it cured me.

Here is a young officer of the name of Vans,

a relation of yours, about sixteen years of age. At Mr. Steuart's the other day Captain Crawford was talking, in a large company, of the scarcity of cash, and saying that he could not have marched the troops from Manchester, if Vans had not lent him money to pay them. This was giving Vans consequence among strangers, and he had only to have said nothing, you know, if he had wished to puff himself off. It was a fine thing for a young Ensign to have more money than the Colonel or the Captains. Vans, however, would not let the matter pass. He said he had lent the Captain seventeen guineas, but, added he, "they were not my own." He laughed when he said it — and I was sure he was a clever boy, and a spirited fellow.

There is another very clever boy, who has taken quite a wrong turn on this subject. He is at College, and has got into company with young men of large fortunes, who spend a great deal more money than he ought to spend. All he ought to do would be to refuse to spend with them; and if any of them cut him on that account, to treat them with contempt. They are fools, and not worth associating with. But, instead of this, he spends as they do, and runs in debt, and then has to come on his father to ad[illegible] for him at the end of the term. So he

wastes his time, and distresses his father; and if he does not soon mend, he will turn out, though a very clever boy naturally, good for nothing, or worse than that.

Here, my dear Shylock, you have a sketch of my mind on an important point, on which I am not much afraid of your going wrong. You have a spirit too proud to submit to the meanness of such conduct when you see it in a true light, and your affectionate heart will assist your understanding. I trust I shall be able to keep you above any real want; and you will not mortify me by aspiring at indulgences, which it would be improper for me to give you, and painful to refuse.

My confidence in your good sense and good heart makes me think of you with more satisfaction than anxiety, as I said at first; otherwise I can foresee that you will have obstacles to remove, and difficulties to surmount. No matter: if you think rightly and act vigorously, you will be the better and the happier for your necessary exertions. Look at the greyhound as he lies by the fire: he has nothing to do; his eye is heavy, his skin is dirty, his hair probably covered with vermin. How stupid and worthless he looks! He is the prototype of the man who has nothing to do, and nothing to wish for. But look again;—he

is now in the field: — how animated he looks his ears are erect — his eye is on fire! The hare is started; — he bounds forward in all the pride of his faculties, and all the vigour of his powers, and in the fervour of the chace finds the highest enjoyment of which he is capable.

We are hounds of a higher order; and, in like manner, must hunt if we are to be happy. The object of our pursuit is different, because we are *partly* rational; though I fear, in many instances, we are also beasts of prey. Be it yours, my dear Shylock, to let the distinction that attends talents and virtue be the hare you follow; and you will find in the pursuit the highest enjoyment which this imperfect world admits. I intended to have said a few words only, but you see I started a hare, and she has run me a long chace. Adieu, my dear Shylock.

J. C.

No. 54.

To the same, at Reading School, aged Thirteen Years and a half.

Liverpool, Sept. 3. 1797.

My dear Boy,

I am two letters in your debt, written on the two last Thursdays, and both very welcome to

me. I am pleased that you like the school so well. I expected you to find some unpleasant circumstances at first. The very act of making such a change as you have done, though for the better (as in the present instance it surely is), must produce more or less pain, till the disruption of old habits and connections loses its influence, from the new habits and connections that are formed. (I use, you see, an uncommon word, *disruption;* but I do not know any one that gives the idea so precisely; and though one ought never to go a hunting after long, or learned, or strange words, yet neither ought one to reject a better word than any other, because it may sound a little uncouth. This by the way.) But though I expected this, I knew you would soon surmount it: the education I have given you has been calculated to enable you to do this. You must, indeed, combat with difficulties, if you expect to be learned, or wise, or good, or brave; and, in the exertion of your faculties, you will find that, while your toils daily diminish, your pleasures will increase; and that you will, in time, reach the elevated station to which those rise, who combine the exercise of talents and virtue. I have said this, or something like it, before. [illegible] matter; such sentiments cannot be too [illegible]ated.

[illegible]ur friend —— has broke[illegible]

It is a very foolish thing for a boy to incur a flogging for any pleasure that such a trespass can give; but I suppose that he was led away by the company he was in, and was ashamed not to do as others did. This false shame is the root of many errors. A boy that will not yield to the solicitations and example of others, is sometimes abused at the time; but if he has the firmness to act for himself, and to respect his own judgment, it is *absolutely certain* that, in the end, the others will respect him.

So you think it probable that you may act a part in the play. If you are a woman, I hope you will conduct yourself with all proper delicacy and decorum. I should like to see you in petticoats. I approve very much of your using the indulgences granted you with reserve. It may be right to go once to the races; but it was right also not to go again.

Mamma has written you a letter, which I enclose. Whether you write to her or me, remember to write about Reading, and the school, and yourself: for, though egotism is not, in general, a judicious thing, yet there is an exception where a son is writing to his parents, and is for the first time at the distance of two hundred miles.

Ad dear boy!

J. C.

No. 55.

Liverpool, Saturday, Sept. 9. 1797.

I have so lately written to you, my dear boy, that this letter will arrive unexpectedly; and, for the first time of my life, I write to you with pain and difficulty; for I have news to communicate that will deeply grieve you. I will not keep you in suspense:—our darling Anne complained a little on Monday; but, till Wednesday afternoon, her symptoms had nothing alarming. That evening, and all Thursday, she was very ill; and yesterday morning, a little before seven, she was released from this world of care and sorrow. To-morrow morning I shall lay her with James and Sarah!

As I write, my dearest Wallace, the tears flow from my eyes—in part for the loss I have suffered, and in part also from the reflection of what you will feel. But you are no longer among entire strangers, since Dr. and Mrs. Valpy have been so good to you; and, on this occasion, I am sure the Doctor will allow some little indulgence to your feelings, especially when he knows how much you were attached to your little sister, and she to you. I could say much

to you of the invariable patience of my little angel under her sufferings; but the subject is rather too much for me, and I am afraid of deepening the impressions of your grief. At a future time I will be more particular.

In our present uncertain state, we must be prepared to taste of our portion of affliction, and to receive and to support it with as much fortitude as our feeble nature will allow. This is the lot of humanity. You are yet young, my dear boy; but if you live to my age, you will, in all probability, nay, to an absolute certainty, have losses to support of a still more serious nature. Fortify yourself, then, to sustain the common heritage of our nature, and to submit with resignation to the providence of God!

When I was precisely of your age, I lost my excellent mother. I was then at school with Dr. Chapman, the author of the Treatise on Education. The accounts of her death arrived at Dumfries on the very morning of the public examination; and, as I was to speak an address to the Clergy and Magistrates, it was resolved to conceal it from me till the day was over. It happened, however, that the intelligence had got among the boys; and one of them unguardedly told me of it, a few minutes before I was to get up to speak. I still remember the shock it gave

me; and the impossibility of suppressing my feelings before so many people, with the fruitless struggle which I made for that purpose, increased my suffering. That you may escape this, I have enclosed my letter to Dr. V., who will give it to you when you are alone.

Let me advise you, my dear William, to resume your studies as speedily as you can. You will find occupation the best alleviation of that grief which time only can remove.

Adieu, my dearest son; be comforted: you and I shall, in due time, follow our dear Anne; and every tie we lose on earth is a new connection with immortality.

J. CURRIE.

No. 56.

Liverpool, October 22. 1797.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

* * * * * *

By this time, I suppose you have found out that the Lancashire pronunciation is not the standard of purity. Get clear of it as soon as you can. If I remember right the people of Reading speak well, so you will not have to con-

tend with the influence of the imitative principle in our nature; it will assist your exertions. When I was at college, I had much trouble to get quit of my Scotticisms, and after all I did not succeed perfectly, though comparatively pretty well. E * * *, who translated Martial's epigrams, came down to Edinburgh to teach us the pure English pronunciation. It was at the time the Mirror was publishing in separate sheets like a small newspaper; and we used to be required to read it sentence by sentence in his class. The particular pronunciation of individual words we learned exactly enough; but it was difficult to get the intonation (you must find out the meaning of this word), because our ears were constantly assailed by the dialect of Scotland, the intonation of which differs wholly from the English. E * * * was a truly learned man, but a quaint affected creature, and could bear no sort of contradiction. He had lost his fore teeth and spoke inarticulately, so that we had but indifferent instruction. I know not how it was, but I never could learn to read well. A recitative, which became habitual early, I never could break through, especially in reading poetry. I believe I had a natural disadvantage in not having those full tones that become audible even in a whisper, and that part from the lips of some men

without effort, and with singular attraction. Yet, in our debating societies in Edinburgh, I was a better speaker than most, when the subject arose to that animation which admits of exertion without that exertion appearing. I would not, therefore, have you discouraged, if your recitation receive little applause at present. You will improve by practice, if you can acquire what is not very easy to *be acquired*, but what has been attained by many, the art of throwing out the sound from the lips with ease. Do you understand this? Never forget that distinct utterance is the principal thing, and this is natural to no one. Practice produces it earlier or later, according to the natural construction of our organs. Taciturn people never speak distinctly. It seems as if the sounds were mangled and murdered in their passage. Women speak more distinctly than men at the same period of life. Their organs are more flexible — their sensibility more acute — their employments more sedentary. Hence a disposition to speak on more trivial impressions, and a command of breath for the purpose of speech. When a labouring man and his wife come together to consult me, the female is always the orator. The poor fellow, toiling with his spade or with his axe, had little breath to spare; but she, sitting at her wheel, &c., could

talk without fatigue, and practice gives perfection. The moral of all this is, that if you would speak well, you must take pains, or else your wife will prove the better orator. This is, indeed, a remote consideration. It is more to the point, that your speaking well or ill may influence my advice to you on your future destination in life.

Adieu, my dear boy!

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 57.

Liverpool, November 21. 1797.

MY DEAR BOY,

When I do not write to you so soon as you expect, you must suppose that I am particularly engaged; for it never can be a matter of choice with me to disappoint any of your reasonable desires, and the wish you express to hear often from me seems not only reasonable, but is very pleasing to me. I have been of late occupied in settling with the booksellers about the publication of a book which is just come out, and of which Dr. Valpy, if Messrs. Cadell and Davies have followed my direction, must have already

received a copy. It is on medical subjects; but as I have used no technical expressions unnecessarily, he will easily understand it. Indeed, if I had used all the terms of art that we possess, as they are all derived from the Greek, Dr. Valpy would have understood them as well as if they had been common expressions.

The case of conscience you put to me about your conduct at the public dinner, is not wholly without its difficulties. Your mother has written to you, and approved entirely of your conduct; and, for my part, I must entirely approve of your not getting intoxicated, be the consequence what it may. Boys, as well as men, when they are doing what is not right, wish to see others keep them in countenance, and feel a sort of resentment against those who reject their solicitations and refuse to follow their example. But a man is a mere slave that regulates his conduct not by what he himself thinks right, but by what others *wish*; and no man ever rose to eminence in virtue, or even in talent, that was not above so miserable a weakness. It is on occasions of the kind you allude to that you must always call to mind Mr. Shepherd's excellent maxim, — "Respect your own judgment." Lay it down, then, as an invariable maxim, never to do what you know to be wrong, whatever may be the

wishes or even the resentments of others. But this point being established, the mode in which you differ from your companions is next to be considered, and that admits of considerable address. It is not wise nor amiable in either man or boy to appear to think himself wiser than others, unless where this flows necessarily from his doing what is right. It is better not to appear morose or supercilious where he can avoid it — but good-humoured and unreserved. Acknowledge the right of others to judge for themselves, while you assert this right for yourself; and treat the subject with good-humour, while it admits of it. Be gentle in manner, and inflexible in resolution, where the question respects right or wrong — where it respects personal inconvenience only, be generous and yielding. I dare say you were right to get up from table at the dinner, because otherwise you could not have kept your resolution of not drinking. If you could have sat still and avoided filling your glass, it might have, perhaps, been as well to have done so. But it is not easy for one unpractised to manage matters with the nicety and skill that time and experience produce. Indeed, I know nothing that occasions more difficulty through the whole course of life than to resist the jollity of jolly fellows without offence. If my paper were not so nearly

done, I would tell you what Dr. Darwin did in that particular: but you shall have it another time.

Your mother and sisters send their love.

Yours ever,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 58.

Liverpool, February 19. 1798.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your letter to your sister is just arrived, and it assures us of your health and happiness. She is beyond measure delighted with it, and has been prevailed on with difficulty to part with it for a few minutes, that I may lay it on the table before me as I write to you. How pleasant it is to reflect, that at the distance of two hundred miles, by putting down a few thoughts on a piece of paper, it is in our power to make a fellow creature share in our feelings, and partake in our happiness! All this we owe to the improvements of civilised society. The communications between the Thames and the Mersey are now easy, rapid, and peaceful. In former days, the banks of these rivers were inhabited by savage nations, hostile to each other, as almost all savage nations

are, and prevented only by want of proximity from engaging in contests of blood. Even within the last two hundred years, a few fishing huts marked the spot where Liverpool was to stand, and arts and letters and epistolary correspondence (one of the most important consequences of literature) were unknown to the uncouth inhabitants. I have been told that on *our* bank of the river the people were peculiarly uncivilised, but that some vestiges of Roman literature were preserved on the Cheshire shore among the monks of Birkenhead Abbey. Civilisation and learning dawned sooner on the banks of the Thames. Reading, I apprehend, was a city when Liverpool was a fishing village, and probably produced characters known in history, or at least in the republic of letters, one or two hundred years ago. Pray enquire how this is of the Doctor, when you think he is at leisure; and let me know what illustrious men your city or county has produced. As to Liverpool, we have been more fortunate in the acquisition of riches than of fame: of the generations past we can say nothing; of the present generation we can say little; and we must look for celebrated men to future generations. Those that come after us will have some advantages which we have not had, especially in literature. Till this time we

have had no public library much superior to a common circulating library. But we have succeeded in setting on foot a scheme for a library for valuable books, conjoined to a coffee-room. It is to be built on the spot of ground above Mr. Case's house, where the Panorama was exhibited. The subscription is filled up, and the money collected. The sum necessary is 3500 guineas; and we start with this capital for the building, and an annual subscription of 700 guineas. The coffee-room occupies the ground floor; the library and museum (which are lighted from the top) the upper story. But I forget you knew something of this before, so I shall say no more about it; only that the building is begun.

You mention your going to London for three days at Easter. I do not like this plan. You have had a vacation of six weeks very lately, during which you did nothing; for which, however, I do not mean to blame you, since you had so many temptations to be idle. You will have another vacation of six weeks before a great while, when you shall visit your friends in London. If you break into the present season for study, you will, I know, dissipate your thoughts and impair your habits of application; and therefore I wish you to decline your good uncle's proposal, in the most respectful and grateful terms.

You know, my dear boy, how much I wish to consult your happiness — but it is *your happiness on the whole*, that is my object; and this can never be obtained without much restraint, and the sacrifice of much present gratification.

* * * * * *

J. C.

No. 59.

Liverpool, February 24. 1798.

My dear Boy,

I am sorry the Doctor did not take upon himself to decide for you as to the contribution for the defence of the nation, though I can conceive he might feel it a delicate point. Subscribe, certainly; and let it be put down in your bill.

I do not wish to enter on politics with you; the subject has become extremely difficult for those who, like me, are warmly attached to their country, and perceive the danger of our situation, without much confidence in the wisdom of those by whom the public measures are directed.

As to you, however, I wish you to think and judge for yourself as soon as you are able to form opinions on points of such magnitude; and at present I wish you to give your atten-

tion rather to the immediate objects of your instruction than to the affairs of the state. In the mean time I do not wish you to show in your conduct any nice distinctions. On any patriotic or charitable occasion I should be sorry that you were behind your fellows, provided that the Doctor has been consulted, and given his approbation to their contributing.

* * * * * *

Adieu, my dear boy,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 60.

Park, September 1. 1798.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

I have been in daily expectation of a letter from you; and you may, perhaps, have looked for one from me. That this unsocial silence may no longer prevail between us, I employ an hour of leisure on a Sunday afternoon, at the Park, in your service. The day is singularly fine. I have been walking down the fields towards the shore. The clouds intercepted the direct beams of the sun; but the air was warm and balmy. A gentle breeze swept over the surface of the grass, and played round my temples. Nothing could be more soothing. I

went down into the Dingle, and pursued my walk to the rocks. The tide was on the flood, and drawing towards high water, and the waves were dashing over the sand, and breaking on the lowest ridge of the rocks. I sat me down and fell a musing. I know not whether you have yet begun to feel the effect of scenery on the mind; but I hope you will be sensible of it as you grow older. The scene which I describe, and which you know so well, always affects me by calling up a particular train of thought, and that rather of a melancholy than of a cheerful kind. Those grand features of nature, the rolling tide, the over-arching rocks, and even the old and blighted oaks which crown their summits, give me ideas of power and duration, compared with which the power of man, and the littleness of his occupations, and the shortness of his life, sink into insignificance!

* * * * * *

Adieu, my dear boy!

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 61.

Liverpool, October 28. 1798.

My dear Wallace,

Though I am sorry to impose any task upon you, and can easily suppose you may have been much engaged, yet I confess I am a little surprised at the length of your silence. Various letters have been sent to you from this within the last six weeks; but during all that time we have never heard from you. And if the *Star* had not informed us that you appeared in the play, we should not even have known that you had a part in that performance.

You are commended, I see, particularly for your attention to the business of the stage; and this kind of commendation pleases me. I doubt if with all your exertions you could ever make a first-rate performer, for that requires a flexibility of organ that you would find it difficult to acquire (I speak, however, doubtingly). But the mimic stage is not your destination; and the quality you are praised for, *attention to the business going forward*, is the most important, and indeed almost the only quality requisite for suc-

cess on the stage, where you must appear — the real stage of life.

It is often to me a subject of curious, and sometimes of melancholy speculation, how much this humble quality (if we may so call it) of attention, outstrips in the race of life the most shining talents without it. This is true in almost every department, but most strikingly so in the department of commerce; and if you continue to prefer it as your destination, I hope, my dear boy, you will lay this observation to heart. You will, perhaps, think I am always harping on one string, but it is a most important one; and if I can once impress you with such a conviction on this point as may influence your conduct, I shall have little fear of your success in life. It is true that, after all, the influence of fortune, as it is called, will affect every man's condition. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither riches to men of understanding." The game of life has in it a mixture of chance and skill; and the most attentive and the most judicious cannot be certain of success. But at the game of whist one would not withdraw all attention from the cards, because sometimes the four honours shall be so often shuffled into the hands of a blockhead, as to give him the victory in despite of his adver-

sary's wisdom, or his own folly. Well, this is very dry, I know.

Your cousin, &c. * * * *

Your affectionate father,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 62.

Liverpool, September 28. 1800.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

I shall expect you to-morrow, unless indeed the weather should be decidedly bad.

* * * * * *

I observe by your letter to your mother, what I could have easily foreseen, that you would be glad to stay another week. And if you stayed another week, it is very probable you would like to stay another still. Nay, if you stayed a month, or two, or three, I question if your reluctance to leave the kind family you are in would be diminished.

I depend on your prudence and propriety of conduct; particularly on your being constantly on your guard against giving trouble, and on the general attention and obligingness of your manners. You are in a very happy and most amiable family, where every one is kind to you, beyond

any claim you have to their kindness. Be cautious how you presume upon it; and though I am far from wishing you to be under unnecessary restraint, always use in your general behaviour a little less freedom than you think might be admissible. You will find this a good and safe rule through life.

I dare say you have already had suggested to you (what has often occurred to me) how much pleasure and pain are linked together, and what a happy world this would be if we could have the first without the last. To render this ideal state, however, *permanently* happy, our nature would require to be changed; for as we are now constituted, pleasure and pain seem necessarily connected by the very structure of our minds; and the capacity of feeling the one is in almost every individual in proportion to the capacity of feeling the other. Something, however, may be done by self-command — self-command which gives moderation in our pleasures, and fortitude in our sufferings; and which, indeed, under the strong impulse of propriety, and a sense of duty, converts, in many cases, the latter into the former. I shall not trouble you at present with a continuance of these sage observations. Suffer me, however, to observe to you, that almost the only danger which a young man of a good heart

and of fair talents incurs of unhappiness arises from the want of this self-command — from the propensity to prefer *what is pleasant at the moment to what is good upon the whole.* If I do not deceive myself this is the weak part of your character, on the side of which you ought to fortify yourself. If ever you live to be my age, and look back, as I do now, on the past, you will find more cause than you perhaps suppose at present, to consider this as not a common-place observation.

But wherefore, you will say, all these remarks at this moment? My dear boy, such remarks are never out of place; and if my anxiety brings this subject again before you (for I have presented it more than once before), do not let my observations fall upon your ear like a tale that is told.

* * * * * *

Ever yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 63.

To the Same, at the University of Edinburgh.

Liverpool, November 1. 1803.

My dear Wallace,

* * * * * *

The kind of correspondence between us must be quite confidential, and you must allow me to give you my opinions and advice, for what else is a father good for?

First, in regard to manners. I have before mentioned to you in conversation, that I think yours will be good with a little attention and care. At present you are a little too noisy at times, and not always sufficiently easy and simple. Simplicity, simplicity, my dear boy — remember W——, and G—— M——, and even C——.

Then, you must not be too pushing. In general society a man can scarcely *indulge* this without trenching more or less on the self-love of others; and nothing shows good sense and good feelings more than to regulate your conduct and manners so as that, while you fill your own place, no one shall accuse you of forwardness or conceit. It is astonishing for what trifles people

will incur this imputation; for instance, for the pleasure of standing high in a country dance. One may excuse a foolish girl the impudence and folly of pushing into a place that does not belong to her, but never a man of any pretensions to sense.

You are making your appearance among a people whose manners and habits of thought differ a good deal from those among whom you have hitherto lived. They are a shrewd, observing people. They will be jealous of your observations on their country: never be so candid as to point out their faults, or what appear to you as such, even though they should lead the way. What you like you may safely acknowledge, but do not be too forward in praising either. I remember when I lived in Edinburgh, and young Englishmen that were at all known, came among us, we were curious to know their opinions of Edinburgh and its society, but so unreasonable as neither to relish censure, nor *violent* praise.

* * * * * *

Be cautious in giving your religious or political opinions. You will hear many narrow, and perhaps sordid, sentiments on politics, I fear, which you will do well, at your age, to pass over as often as you can.

When I recommend caution, do not suppose I recommend subterfuge or disguise. To wave these subjects is in general best; but if you must speak, let it always be your genuine sentiments, expressed, however, with modesty and calmness.

Adieu, my very dear Wallace!

Your ever affectionate father,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 64.

Liverpool, November 12. 1803.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

Your letters of the 1st and of the 8th of the month arrived safe, and gave me, I assure you, the greatest pleasure. It shall go very hard with me before I complain of the expense of such communications, and in truth, I know not how I could lay out my money to better account. Continue to write to me in the same confidential, unreserved way, and let me have your observations on all you see. I should certainly have answered your first, had it not contained the promise of your second, for which I waited, that I might take both at once. In future, our communications will reply to each other, and be strictly correspondence.

Now I shall take your two letters, and read

them over, and answer any points that require it. Do so always with my last letter, when you write to me, and do not trust to memory. Thus we shall *correspond*. I entirely approve of your taking notes at lectures; but I do not know that I should wish you to take every thing *verbatim*, even if you possessed a short-hand that would admit of it. He who takes notes is obliged to consider the sense, and to exercise his mind in putting it into new and more concise terms. This is at once to exercise the attention and the judgment, and to impress the memory. But in taking the whole *verbatim*, one exercises the attention on the expression principally, and in recording the individual words the sense probably escapes you, or makes so transient an impression that it is speedily forgotten. Besides, you are to consider that these lectures do not consist of much original matter. The chief of their substance is to be found in books; and the chief advantage of a lecture is that it gives a clear, comprehensive view of the subject in a way most likely to impress the memory, illustrating the different doctrines by experiments to which the attention should be particularly alive. Nothing will be more useful than to take notes which, if you copy them into a book on the same day, you may extend almost into an abridgment. But do not attempt to learn short-hand, which will take

up too much time, and puzzle and perplex you. These observations of mine are, I assure you, founded on experience. We used always to observe that those who had the professors' lectures most fully in their short-hand, had least of them in their memory. However, you may consult Mr. Stewart on this point, and you may mention what I say to Tertius.*

In regard to the expression you notice, "feel a fragrant smell," (an expression which the streets of Auld Reekie very often, I suppose, recall to your mind,) it is not a Scotticism, and it may be defended in point of accuracy, if you allow *feel* to be taken figuratively. But it sounds oddly; the word "feel" taken from one sense, being used figuratively, while the word "smell" taken from the other, is used literally. You have no doubt, however, observed, that feel, see, hear, smell, taste, are all very often used figuratively, and some of them more frequently in a figurative sense than any other. "I feel my wants;" "I see my error;" "I taste the beauties of poetry," &c.

On reflection, "smell" is perhaps an exception, at least a familiar instance of its figurative use does not occur to me at the moment, and I certainly think the expression to which you allude is not elegant. Your observations on Professor

* S. T. Galton, Esq. of Birmingham, the editor's friend and companion while in Edinburgh.

Robison are, I believe, very correct. I shall be happy to hear that you have got a private tutor in mathematics.

The ancients, and almost all the moderns, till Pere Bouffier and Dr. Reid, supposed we did not immediately see or feel the objects of sight or feeling themselves (*e. g.* a candle or a table), but that certain impressions were made by these objects on our senses, and through these impressions (called by the ancients *forms*, *phantasms*, *species*, and by the moderns, *ideas*,) that we alone become acquainted with the existence of external things. What Berkeley affirmed was that all that we know is the existence of *these impressions:* that there is no evidence of any other existence; and that the existence of an external world is a mere theory. In fact, he held that there is no external world. Hume refined on this. He said to Bishop Berkeley, "You say *I* and *we*, as if there was any evidence of beings to which these terms are applicable, independent of the impressions of which they are conscious. There is no such evidence. All existence consists in *unappropriated impressions.*" This is the triumph of scepticism, the *reductio ad absurdum.* Hume fairly acknowledges that neither he nor any man else ever acted, or could act, on such speculations; and the chief advantage he proposes from them is to teach us modesty in our

speculative opinions, and candour towards those who differ from us. If you are in the College library at any time, and find the Analytical Review there, you will see an article by me on Dr. Reid's "Active Powers of Man," which runs through four numbers in the first and second volumes, to which I have prefixed a general view of these doctrines, which will be plainer than what I write.

I shall be very well satisfied with your lodgings, if you and Tertius are so. His father represented the gentleman you are with as a very religious man, and on that account wished T. to be with him. I like religion too, and wish you to hold firmly by every thing in it, that is calculated to influence conduct or improve happiness. But sometimes what is called a very religious man is a great observer of forms, and a great stickler for certain religious doctrines, particularly those which have least influence on conduct, and which from their mysterious nature are most subjects of controversy. Now, certainly, this kind of zeal is no recommendation.

I am glad to find that you attend divine service regularly at Mr. Alison's. He is one of the most amiable and enlightened clergymen of the present day, if I am rightly informed.

Adieu, my dear boy. — As to dining out,

I must leave it entirely to yourself, having given you my opinion generally.

Your affectionate Father,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 65.

Liverpool, December 8. 1803.
11 o'clock, P. M.

MY DEAR WALLACE.

We have not heard from you for a great while, and suppose you are waiting to write by George; however, I shall send you a few lines, if it were only to show you my hand-writing.

I hope there are letters on the road which continue the particulars of your life and conversation. I keep all you write, and as you will have an opportunity of inspecting them yourself when you return, they will serve the purpose of a journal. In this view what pleases us all highly at the present moment will serve in the end as a gratification to yourself.

* * * * * *

Let me advise you not to hazard inconsiderate opinions: you are associating with persons who have had many of them superior advantages to you, and who are therefore often your superiors in knowledge, when they are not so in understanding. To prevent their exercising this ad-

vantage, you must be cautious how you adventure on unknown ground. I speak of general conversations. And never be afraid to confess ignorance, for this is the way to get information and instruction *gratis*. There are, in fact, few more certain means of attaching others to you than by the indirect respect, and perhaps flattery, inferred in applying to them for instruction.

* * * * * *

J. C.

No. 66.

Liverpool, January 8. 1804.

My dear Wallace,

I intended to have written to you on the first day of the year, but was prevented; so you must now, though rather late, receive from me what are called the compliments of the season, in every affectionate wish for your long life, happiness, and virtue. I put the three together, for it is in this combination only that long life is desirable.

* * * * * *

I believe you are desirous of pleasing, and disposed to be pleased. Such dispositions give the judgment fair play, and in estimating human character and conduct, incline it to the side of charity and mercy. Where the understanding is weak, this bias is often unsafe to the

individual. Where it is strong, the danger of it is comparatively little, and it contributes to personal happiness as well as to social enjoyment. This bias I have always considered as that which great minds most naturally assume. It associates itself with elevation of thought; with that cast of mind which delights in original enterprise, and is capable of noble achievements. Like every thing human, evil may result from it, but *on the whole* it is best.

I have received your several letters: they are very pleasing, nay gratifying to me. The society you are in cannot easily be surpassed. You seem to enjoy it as you ought, and to estimate it as it deserves. Depend upon it, the notice of such men as Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Stewart is an advantage and a distinction which will rise in your estimation as your experience enlarges, and of which you will be proud to speak in after-times. I say nothing of the other distinguished persons by whom you have been noticed, or of the friendship of our honourable and virtuous Macneill.

* * * * * *

I do not believe I ever said so many civil things to you before, but I thought you entitled to my sentiments, and that you would be encouraged, not injured, by my declared approbation.

* * * * * *

Remember me to Mr. Young particularly: ask him if he remembers our climbing Burnswark* together, and meeting fairies on the top of the hill.

Adieu, my very dear Wallace, — I have much to say, but my time and paper are consumed.

Ever yours most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 67.

Liverpool, January 29. 1804.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

* * * * * *

I am very happy that you take such an interest in Mr. Stewart's lectures. There is nothing like them, certainly, to be found any where; and they are alone worthy of a winter's residence in Edinburgh. But I also wish to hear that Dr. Hope engages your attention. Chemistry is, not merely in point of fashion but of real utility, the branch of natural philosophy most important to be known. It is the combination of chemistry with mechanics that has

* High table-land in Annandale, so called, and a very conspicuous object from a great distance, in the South of Scotland.

made so very large an addition to human power in latter times: *e. g.* in the steam-engine, of which I should be glad to have a description from you at your leisure,—I do not mean of the mere outward form, but of the principles of its action.

Be so good, in the first place, however, to tell me what Mr. Stewart says of Mr. Malthus's doctrine; and do yourself try and state to me shortly what his fundamental principles are. You have not read his book, but perhaps you will have comprehended Mr. Stewart's analysis of it. For my part, I have read and considered the work with attention; and, I confess to you, not without some painful impressions. Though he carries the application of his doctrines too far, yet I cannot wholly resist the evidence of their truth; and the conclusions are not of a cheering nature. Common opinion has been too much in favour of increase of population, as being the criterion of increased strength and happiness to a community; and the speculations of political economy have dwelt too little on this serious and melancholy truth, that there may be, and that there often is, a morbid excess of population, contributing to the vice and misery of a people. Ireland seems to present a picture of this at the present day.

A conclusion from the principles of Mr. Malthus, which all young men ought particularly to feel, is the serious moral injury from irregular connections with the female sex; not merely from the distress brought upon the unhappy female, a thing too obvious to have been overlooked, but from the chance of giving to the world an unprotected being, exposed to all the ills which the peculiar helplessness of our species during infancy renders us liable to, — exposed to the misery of a diseased existence and a premature grave!

Another conclusion is the folly, and, indeed, *the guilt*, of an imprudent marriage: this term may sound harsh, but I am convinced it is applicable. Without having provided reasonable means of subsistence, according to the habits of the parties, without having secured the qualities of prudence, temper, and judgment, so necessary in domestic life, —for two young people to rush together under the illusion of appetite or passion, embellished by imagination, is to fall very generally into one of the most dangerous, because the most powerful and seducing, of all snares which are laid for generous and affectionate hearts.

Of all the foolish things you do, my dear boy, let a foolish marriage be the last. It is irretriev-

able, and will decide the colour of your future existence. The best observations on marriage I know are contained in a letter from Dr. Aikin to his son. By the by, your sister has been reading these letters to me lately; they are excellent: I know not that there are in the English language any two volumes of equal extent, that have my more entire approbation, or that I would recommend to your attention with greater earnestness.

J. C.

No. 68.

" Liverpool, February 19. 1804.

My dear Wallace,

Your description of the steam-engine is satisfactory; and what you say of Malthus perfectly correct so far as it goes. He goes, however, further than you suppose. No care of government, nor any human industry, is, in his judgment, equal to making the increase of subsistence proceed in an equal ratio with the increase of numbers, if the principle of population were unchecked. Vice, poverty, and misery, with the moral and physical diseases which spring from them, such as wars and fevers, are the means

employed in the system of Providence for keeping the numbers down to the level of subsistence; and thus the far greater part of the evils which speculatists, such as Godwin and Condorcet, have imputed to defective governments, is interwoven in the system of society itself, and seemingly inseparable from the nature of man. Does any accidental circumstance positively or relatively increase the means of subsistence, immediately the principle of population increases in activity, and the number of the human race is rapidly increased to a degree that restores the former ratio between population and subsistence; a ratio which, in all settled conditions of society, is inseparably connected with much misery, since, the principle of population being so much stronger than the power of increasing subsistence, the balance between them is kept up, not by the voluntary cessation of its efforts in the contemplation that subsistence is already engrossed, but by the subsequent destruction of supernumeraries after birth, either by famine, wars, or disease.

Famine, wars, diseases, &c. &c., Malthus calls the physical checks to excessive population. He allows, indeed, that there is another check,—that among the more cultivated and reflecting parts of society persons are prevented from marrying by [illegible] difficulty of subsisting them-

selves, and the fear of not being able to maintain a family. This is what he calls the moral check, and what he wishes to see more general in its operation. But while so large a portion of the human race are sunk in ignorance, and the stimulus to sexual intercourse is so strong, the connection between the sexes will be regulated rather by brutal impulse than by rational considerations. And, again, whilst this last is the case, there is an effectual bar to any permanent amelioration of the condition of the great body of our species.

That any increase, absolute or relative, in the quantity of food increases in a still greater proportion the number of people, till the advantage is counterbalanced, may be illustrated by the history of Ireland. That island contained a million of inhabitants in 1700; in 1800 it contained four millions. This arose, in my opinion, almost entirely from the substitution, which began about the first period, of potatoes for bread in the food of the poor; and by which one acre produced as much subsistence, though of an inferior kind, as four before. This being the case, the maintenance of a family became easy, the poor married early and inconsiderately, and population accelerated rapidly. It can go no further now, I believe, for potatoes and buttermilk (the cheapest of all food) cannot be ob-

tained, at the present rate of labour, for a greater number; and the wages of labourers cannot be increased while the competition for labour (from the number of labourers) is so great.

The case of Ireland was that of an *absolute* increase of food; — what happened in France, during the Revolution, was a case of the *relative* increase. The population was suddenly and greatly diminished by battle, murder, and emigration. Though there was no absolute increase of the means of subsistence, yet, this remaining the same and the number to be subsisted being diminished, there was a relative increase of food as to those remaining. Hence, early marriages, increased births, and a rapid filling up of the deficient number. And hence it is that the losses by wars and emigrations are, in all cases, so speedily replaced.

What Malthus endeavours to show, is not that there were no lives lost by the Revolution of France, but that the number now alive in France is as great as if no revolution had taken place. His reasoning seems to be confirmed by facts, if we may trust a statement lately published at Hamburgh, and given to me by Edward Littledale, which makes the deaths in France, during 1803, 900,000; the births, 1,100,000; — an increase of 200,000 in a single year.

I wished much to hear whether Mr. Stewart admits Malthus's principles and deductions from them, which are of the most important kind. I wish to see an able article in the Edinburgh Review on this curious, interesting, and melancholy subject. In return for your very interesting anecdotes *, I will give you one that

* For the sake of these anecdotes, the introduction of the following passage from the Editor's letter referred to will, it is hoped, not be considered impertinent.

" Edinburgh, Feb. 10. 1804.

" I supped at Professor Robison's last week, and spent a very agreeable evening. I had some interesting conversation with him. He had stated to us at the lecture, that at Quebec he had had an opportunity of seeing some shells discharged from the mortar, alluding to the doctrine of projectiles, of which he was treating, and I spoke to him on the subject. He told me that General Wolfe kept his intention of attacking Quebec a most profound secret; not even disclosing it to the Second in Command, and that the night before the attack nothing was known. The boats were ordered to drop down the St. Lawrence, and it happened that the boat which Professor Robison, then a midshipman, commanded, was very near the one General Wolfe was in. A gentleman was repeating Gray's Elegy to the latter, and Mr. Robison heard him (the General) say, 'I would rather have been the author of that piece than beat the French to-morrow;' and from this remark guessed that the attack was to be made the next day.

" I may mention another anecdote, that Colonel Grey told us at Mr. Stewart's when I dined there. In the American war, his father, Lord (then Sir Charles) Grey commanded a detachment which took possession of and

relates to the point on which we are speaking:—A gentleman of a liberal education had, according to the fashion of the times, indulged himself, some years ago, in speculations on the improvement of the human race, and the perfectibility of man. By long, deep, and solitary meditation on these subjects, his mind became unsettled, and his reason gave way. He seemed to himself to want nothing but power to make mankind happy; and at length he became convinced *that he had a right to that power.* The consequence of this rendered it necessary to confine him; and about two years afterwards he was removed by his friends from the situation in which he was originally fixed, and placed under my care. At the time of which I speak he was become perfectly calm: he was on general subjects rational, and on every subject acute; but the original hallucinations were as fixed as ever. In occasional discussions of his visionary projects, I had urged, of my own suggestion, the objection, that when men became so happy as he proposed to make them, they would increase

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occupied Dr. Franklin's house. While there, they treated the Doctor very well, and at their departure, the only thing Sir Charles took away was an admirable picture of him, which is a remarkable likeness, and which he (Lord Grey) has now at Howick. This circumstance, I understand, pleased Franklin very much."

too fast for the limits of the earth. He felt the force of this; and, after much meditation, proposed a scheme for enlarging the surface of the globe, and a project of an act of parliament for this purpose, in a letter addressed to Mr. Pitt*, very well expressed, and seriously meant, but which, if published, would appear satirical and ludicrous in a high degree. Having had occasion to mention his situation to his brother, a man of letters, he proposed that an experiment should be made of putting the quarto edition of Malthus's Essay into his hands; to which I assented. It was given to him last autumn, and he read it with the utmost avidity and seeming attention. In my visits I did not mention the subject to him, but desired the keeper to watch him narrowly. After finishing the perusal, he got pen, ink, and paper, and sat down, seemingly with an intention to answer it, or to write notes upon it. But he did not finish a single sentence, though he began many. He then sat down to read the book again, aloud, and finished this second perusal in a few days, not omitting a single word, but stopping at times, and apparently bewildered. I now spoke to him, and introduced the subject, but he was sullen and impatient. He became very thoughtful, walked at a great pace in his

* Now in the possession of Dr. Traill of Liverpool.

airing-ground, and stopped occasionally to write, if I may so speak, words, but more frequently numbers, with a switch in the sand. These he obliterated, as I approached him. This continued some days, and he appeared to grow less thoughtful; but his mind had taken a melancholy turn.

One afternoon he retired into his room, on the pretence of drowsiness. The keeper called him in a few hours, but he did not answer. He entered, and found the sleep he had fallen into was the sleep of death. He had "shuffled off this mortal coil."

At the moment that I write this, his copy of Malthus is in my sight; and I cannot look at it but with extreme emotion.

If you should mention this to Mr. Stewart, or any other person, you must say that the story cannot be published, as his very respectable friends are ignorant *of the manner of his death*, and, knowing all the previous circumstances, would, on seeing them combined, instantly discover it. *

I have no doubt that he perceived sufficiently

* Having ascertained that the surviving relatives of this unfortunate gentleman have been swept away since the date of this occurrence, the editor feels himself released from this injunction.

the force of Malthus's argument to see the wreck of all his castle-building, and that this produced the melancholy catastrophe.

There are so many of the other points of your letter untouched, that I must take another opportunity of noticing them.

No. 69.

Liverpool, February, 1804.

My dear Wallace,

Your mother and sister are gone to your aunt's, where there is a young party and a little dance to-night. I ought to have gone too, but felt indisposed, and resolved to go quietly to bed, and indulge a little meditation. Lucy is my attendant and nurse, and has just made tea for me. She and James are sitting at the table by the fire, each writing an exercise. They are very quiet, and have not disturbed my thoughts. I have not been able to fall into those trains of imagination that lead to sleep. I have wandered to Edinburgh, and have been conversing with you. I have been talking on the points in your two last letters which are unanswered, and have at last resolved to sit up in bed, and put what I have said, or have to say, on paper.

First, then, I must tell you, that on re-perusing your account of Mr. Watt's steam-engine, I find an inaccuracy, which I apprehend is verbal only, but which it is proper should be corrected. You say the vapour or steam issuing from the boiling water enters the cylinder above the piston, which by its *gravity* it forces down, and this sets the machine in motion. Now it is not by its gravity; for steam is, I think, lighter than air, and consequently *in air* its gravity is, relatively speaking, less than nothing, *i. e.* it has a tendency to ascend not to descend. The power by which steam acts is the prodigious expansion which the same portion of water acquires in passing from water into steam, from a liquid to an aëriform state; and this is not gravity, but *elasticity;* which is the word you should have employed. Water possesses little or none of this, and occupies, you know, comparatively, an inconsiderable portion of space. The same portion of matter may be easily, and almost instantaneously, by a small change of temperature, converted successively into water and steam; and on the different degrees of *space* which it occupies in these two states, depend all the successive movements of Mr. Watt's engine, the most important of all the presents which science has made to the arts of life.

The mariner's compass, printing, &c. were discovered by chance. The fire and steam-engines are deductions of pure science in all their gradations. I do not wonder that Tertius and yourself find that metaphysical subjects leave little impression on the mind. If you ask Mr. Stewart to account for this, he will explain it to you. In early life our attention is employed on external objects, and not at all on the operations of our own minds; the study of which requires habits of abstraction and attention that cannot be acquired without considerable practice. Yet these habits of attention and abstraction are valuable in many other points of view; particularly as increasing the power of volition (as Locke calls it), or that faculty by which we regulate our own thoughts and conduct, — a power of the utmost importance both to science and virtue. Do not, however, be too anxious to comprehend things all at once. You must get initiated now, and as inclination or leisure prompts, you can pursue the subject in future. I was a year older than you before I attended to metaphysics at all. But they took hold of me a good deal, and for several years engaged much of my attention. The chief difficulty I found in pursuing the study arose (I should perhaps say arises) from the inaccuracy and the imperfection of language. This leads

people engaged in such studies to labour at overcoming the difficulty; which obliges them to appreciate words and sentences carefully, in order that they make the *expression equivalent to, and exactly representative of, the thought.* Hence, he who has studied metaphysics, obtains a superior command both of thoughts and language on other subjects, which is, by the way, the chief practical use of the study. Metaphysics, indeed, involve the principles of general grammar, a very interesting subject, which the work of Horne Tooke has brought into fashion among us. And this leads me to an anecdote which Tooke mentioned the other day in company with a friend of ours. — He stated that during the contest for Westminster he had said some severe things on the hustings of Mr. Fox when absent, and was doubtful how he might take them. Next day Fox appeared, and soon seemed absorbed in thought, walking backwards and forwards on the back part of the hustings, while the people were voting; and often looking him (Tooke) in the face in a very strange way, but without saluting him. He had no doubt he was meditating a philippic against him, to be poured out from the hustings at the end of the day's poll. At length, however, he came up to Mr. Tooke rather courteously, and desired to say a word to him on one

side; — it was to consult him on some difficulty that had arisen in the course of his meditation, which had been on the various coincidences and differences between *which* and *that*. I will not be sure that I state the point exactly, but it was this or something similar. Indeed, Fox is most deep and most clear on all the principles of general grammar, and the derivation of words; and it may serve to show the habits of his study, as well as the kindness of his temper, that the sight of Tooke, instead of suggesting the hostility of the man, should have excited a train of thought arising out of his "winged words."

I entirely agree with you in your reflections on the suspension of the slave-trade: Heaven grant that it may be suspended for ever! — I heartily rejoice in the rise of the negro commonwealth in St. Domingo, one of the most extraordinary occurrences of these extraordinary times. I hope the black man will be found capable of all the blessings of civilisation, and of all the relations of peace and amity; and I earnestly wish him fair play.

Professor Robison was mistaken, I think, in his assertion that the skin absorbs moisture from immersion in cold water. It is the common opinion, but I believe it is erroneous. I have treated on the subject in my Medical Reports, where the

partial relief of the thirst from this immersion is explained on other principles.

No. 70.

Liverpool, April 5. 1804.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

* * * * * *

The observations you make in your letter of the 11th of March, on the difficulty of fixing the attention on metaphysical speculations, and the causes of this difficulty, are ingenious and just. I have no doubt that you will get over it as much as is necessary. In the power of attention you will find your mind improve for some years to come; in apprehension, considered simply, you are come, I suppose, to your *acme*. Habits of deep study, of whatever nature the study may be, are apt to absorb the mind, and to withdraw the attention from present objects; while the qualities that please in conversation and in the intercourse of society, require a person to be, at the moment at least, alert and at home. The study of subjects that do not easily enter into conversation is more apt than any other to unfit a man for society; because, besides the effect of abstraction itself, the subjects are of a kind

that furnishes no materials for the usual intercourse of life, nothing that the memory can store up for common talk, nothing that the imagination can new model and embellish. But this applies much more to mathematics than metaphysics. The mathematician does not even associate language with his thoughts, figures are the medium of his reflections. On the contrary, the metaphysician, except when he is unprofitably engaged in the first principles of thought, is perpetually conversant with subjects that border on, and that actually form, the topics of the best conversation; such as enquiries into the beautiful and sublime, into the powers of memory, into the phenomena of the imagination, into the structure of language, into all the principles of human action: and if, along with the knowledge requisite for such discussions, he has acquired a suitable command of easy and clear expression, he has obtained the power of not only rendering himself useful and instructive in conversation, but agreeable and even splendid in a high degree. Johnson and Burke of the last age, and Mackintosh of the present, are acknowledged to have surpassed all their contemporaries in conversation; though the two last, at least, may be considered as profound metaphysicians, and the first a metaphysician of no ordinary degree. Such men possess

the power of expression commensurate with their other powers; and it is the want of this, to which abstract students are too apt to be inattentive, that gives a foundation for Mr. Stewart's remark. A ready command of language for the thoughts as they arise can only be acquired by practice; and no man can excel in conversation who neglects to converse. I dare say Mr. Stewart will agree to every word of this.

In regard to absorption, I can only say that my experience has been the very reverse of what is mentioned by Professor Robison. I have made at least a hundred direct experiments to ascertain whether the body is augmented in weight after immersion in water, and I did not find that it was in a single instance. My trials were with fresh water of various degrees of temperature from 98° to 40°.

Yours most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 71.

Bath, March 26. 1805.

MY DEAR WALLACE,

If I do not write oftener, or longer letters to you, this arises not from neglect on my part, but

from a degree of attachment that at the present moment makes the task of writing *to you* rather difficult. I think of you much and tenderly. Of all the privations which my present decision involves, I need not tell you which is by far the most painful: yet I often check myself when I feel this too sensibly. It has pleased God to allow us to enjoy each other's society much longer than is usual for fathers and sons; and now that we are parted, you are not gone from me to a far distant or unhealthy country, or into a service of danger or hazard, but you remain where you were born, in the midst of old connections, and I am removed from you a comparatively short distance, which may be run over in twenty-four hours, if necessary. I am where I can command your society at any time, and where I hope confidently to see you before many months are past. Let us take comfort then, my dear boy. What is chiefly to be wished for is my health, which I hope a milder climate will restore.

Adieu, my dearest son,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 72.

*To his Daughter *, at School at Newcastle-on-Tyne.*

Liverpool, April 26. 1803.

MY DEAR JEAN,

I have long intended to write to you; but the extreme occupation of my time, and the reflection that my deficiencies were supplied by your mother, have hitherto prevented me. This, however, is your birthday, and I am not willing that it should pass over without giving you some proof of my remembrance, and of my affection. I shall therefore begin a letter, though I doubt whether I shall be able to finish it. As we are to meet so soon, and not, I hope, for a short time, I might perhaps have found a sort of apology for giving up entirely what I have delayed so long; but this very circumstance makes me wish to write to you, that I may communicate to you beforehand some particulars which you may make the subject of your reflections. You are now come to a most interesting period

* Now the wife of John Trench, Esq., of Woodlawn, in the County of Galway.

of your life. You are about to return to your father's family as a young woman, which you left when a child; and to enter more or less into general society. On the first impressions which you make, your character will in a considerable degree depend; and I need not say how desirous your mother and I shall be, that these impressions should be favourable.

On your leaving school, you will no doubt part with many of your companions with regret: — and there are perhaps several with whom you will wish to establish a correspondence. You will perhaps be surprised when I tell you, that I am not disposed to encourage generally the correspondence of young ladies of your period of life, especially when it is carried on without the superintendence or control of their parents or friends. I have a very favourable opinion of your prudence and steadiness, and I know that the general opinions of life and conduct, which you have received from Mrs. Wilson, are likely to correspond entirely with my own; but you are young, my dear child, with a good deal of warmth of heart and of imagination, and the views which you have, must necessarily be characterised more or less with the qualities of your own mind. These experience will in many instances correct. All this is in the usual, and indeed inevitable,

order of things; but there is, perhaps, no period in the whole of our lives that man or woman is less disposed to be doubtful of themselves than that at which you have arrived. And two young women, pouring out to each other the unrestrained effusion of their hearts, often fortify each other in faults and errors. I shall therefore advise you to be as choice in your correspondents as in your companions; to keep up an intercourse by letter with one or two only, and those only the most respectable. If no such offer, it is far better to have none. Miss B—— would, I dare say, be valuable as a correspondent, or such a woman as Lady ——. *She* would be most valuable, but must not be hoped for. But unless you have such, or nearly such correspondents, your time may be better engaged in other occupations. Nothing in nature is more frivolous than the intercourse by letter between two giddy or romantic misses, to say the best of it. But sometimes it is not merely frivolous; it is mutually injurious. You see my opinion on this subject. I do not mean to lay down a positive rule for you; but I give you the result of my observations for your serious consideration.

When you return to us, my dear Jean, we shall not wish to introduce you at once into the whole circle of our acquaintance.

This is a subject that will require a good deal perhaps of self-denial, both to us and you; but we must be governed by what is prudent on the whole, not what may be at the moment most agreeable. Happily, we have a number of valuable friends and connections in whose society you will receive both pleasure and profit.

You must in the midst of our busy family endeavour to keep up all your good habits. You must continue your studies in the line of improvement, and do your best to occupy your time, and to occupy it usefully. I expect, myself, to have great pleasure and comfort in your society. You shall make breakfast for your brother and me, and you shall, when agreeable to yourself, read for me, and sometimes, when you have time, copy for me. My eyes begin to fail. The hand of time is upon me!

* * * * * * * *

I am certain you will be disposed to study our happiness — do it silently, if you please; it will not be the less observed. Let this, indeed, be a general rule in bestowing your attentions on others, to avoid all appearance of bustle or parade. Approbation is always bestowed most liberally where it is not demanded, and gratitude flows most freely, when it is rather shunned than courted. Be your manners quiet, easy, natural,

and attentive — the offspring of a good understanding, a cultivated taste, and an affectionate heart. Put your emotions under control; I wish you to be kind and generous, and to feel always something more than you express.

My dear love to dear Lucy. Accept the same yourself, my very dear Jean, and believe me ever

Your affectionate Father,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 73.

Liverpool, June 17. 1803.

MY DEAR JEAN,

So short a time has now to run till I hope to see you, that you will scarcely expect that I should write to you; but Mr. —— offering to carry my letter, I am led to say a few words to you in the way of observation and advice, which I know you will receive as a proof of my affection.

On your return many questions will be doubtless asked you respecting the school you have left: on all such occasions, say what good you can, and keep any observation that is of a contrary kind to yourself. You will also be asked the characters of the young ladies, your friends or companions, especially those from Liverpool. Use a like reserve respecting them;

for I have observed, that remarks made by girls from the same school on each other, are very apt to be repeated, and when they go round, to be much resented. It is highly important to a young lady to avoid unfavourable criticisms, and there is no way so likely to escape them as herself to avoid criticising others.

You must not suppose that, by offering this observation to you, I have conceived an opinion that you are critically or censoriously disposed. I never saw any thing of this sort about you; but I am putting you on your guard against the openness of your own heart in committing to others too freely sentiments which, though they may even be just, it may, however, be wise and prudent to keep in reserve. The conduct of some young women coming from school has to my knowledge been very foolish, in the particulars I have guarded you upon, and has done them much injury.

* * * * *

I was much pleased to see that you wish to continue your improvements after you get home. In this plan you shall have every encouragement and assistance I can give you. I shall be proud to find that my daughter is not a mere every-day woman, courting amusement, and

weary of thought; but one who has resources in her own mind, and who aspires to the friendship of those of both sexes who are truly estimable.

* * * * * * * *

Adieu, my dear Jean,
Yours most affectionately,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 7.

*To Lucy Currie *, his youngest Daughter, at School, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, aged Ten Years and a half.*

January 18. 1802.

MY DEAR LUCY,

* * * * * * * *

I love you very much with all your faults, because I know you will strive to mend them; and if you do, you will succeed. What you require is, to think before you act or speak; and when you *have* thought, not to speak or act at all unless you see that it is proper on reflection.

Little pots they say are soon hot; little minds are easily moved. Now, what I wish is, that

* Now the wife of the Rev. Henry Moore, Rector of Carnew, in the County of Wicklow.

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you should not be a little mind; that you should not be a feather, that is blown about by every wind; but that you should be guided by your judgment. You are no longer young; you are getting to be an oldish sort of a girl. Do, my darling, try to be a little thoughtful.

Above all things, my dear child,

SPEAK TRUTH!

I do not fear that you will be guilty of premeditated falsehood — God forbid I should have the pain to think so! but thoughtless girls do not always consider what they say, and their tongues sometimes run so fast, that when they have done, they find they have been talking, not from memory, but from fancy; or rather, that where memory should alone have dictated, fancy has interfered. Mrs. Wilson will, I dare say, explain this.

* * * *

Your ever affectionate Father,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 75.

To a young Friend, nearly his own Age.

Liverpool, 1782.

MY DEAR ——,

* * * * * *

It is true that I have been a little flippant with you of late, and it is no less certain that you have taken it uncommonly hotly. I am high and you are low-spirited on the same occasion. I am happy in the thoughts of your settling at ——; and you are anxious and uneasy on account of the uncertainty of your prospect. In that event I see nothing that does not tend to give me pleasure; you view it with concern and anxiety. But after all I have been wrong, and therefore I ask your pardon. And this I do rather to satisfy myself, than you, because you will not require it. We have been nurtured in habits of such rude familiarity with one another, that it is no wonder if we are sometimes mutually hurt at circumstances which happen before strangers. On this subject my complaints have been more numerous than yours; and as I have used the liberty of remonstrating, it is proper that I attend to your remonstrances in turn.

And I am very sensible I was wrong, and sorry for it.

* * * * *

For God's sake! do not be cast down, but remember that a firm, collected mind in every situation will crown abilities with success; and that it not only is the greatest blessing, but deserves the highest praise of any intellectual endowment.

* * * * * * * *

Excuse all my faults and failings, and expose them to my view as I do yours; it is this that makes our friendship useful and honourable; it is this which stamps its purity, and makes it to me a source of never-failing happiness.

No. 76.

1782.

MY DEAR ——,

* * * * * * * *

There are other remarks in this letter to which I again most earnestly recal your attention. Do, for the love of God! be more guarded. You are not aware to what injuries the openness of your heart and speech exposes you. Take the world at large, you will find nothing but caution and reserve; and if at any time pru-

dence is dropped, you will find it most generally for some purpose of hatred or malice. Naked and exposed, you encounter men cased in impenetrable armour. It is true, you have nothing to fear from a thorough examination. What then? The number who can value a heart noble and sincere, is comparatively speaking small; and the world is full of selfishness and malice.

Once more, my dear ——, let me request you to use no familiarity with those you do not esteem; there is no man whom dignity of manners more becomes, nor any who has, in general, a more proper sense of the dignity of character. Again, let me request you to suffer fools and blockheads, if such you meet with, to pass unheeded. What occasion is there for you to take notice of every foolish thing that is said or done in your company, and to be witty upon it? I declare solemnly that your wit is mere caustic — and many more enemies are made, as you know, by insulting their understanding, than by detecting their vices. Besides, this conduct of yours looks like vanity and conceit; for he who laughs at another, tacitly assumes a superiority to himself.

It is this circumstance, my dear ——, that has in many instances brought on you the character of a conceited fellow (a character, indeed, which

people often get who exert superiority of talents); and I question whether I am not the only man on earth, who knows that your real opinion of yourself is greatly below par — at least in respect to those qualities of which you have most reason to be proud.

* * * * *

I am anxious to converse with you. I do not know what has got into me, but I am become more restless and uneasy on your account, in proportion as my own happiness seems to become less problematical.

I do not like the temper of mind in which you write. You seem to have given up every idea except of one thing, and, like a desperate gamester, appear willing to risk every thing upon one cast.

My dear ——, believe this serious and solemn truth: no man ever took the world by storm. He who hopes to come off conqueror, must make his approaches gradually and unremittingly; be ready to repair mistakes, to engage with difficulties in the detail, to possess the faculties of his mind firm and unruffled in every change of fortune, and especially, in every step of his progress, to make his footing sure.

One thing let me tell you — you must procure the good will of those around you, and preserve

it; otherwise every thing will be vain. Situated as you are, you ought to be universally esteemed; the echoings of a fair name are only inferior in value to gold. — Adieu!

J. C.

No. 77.

To the same.

Liverpool, 1783.

My dear ——,

Have the generosity to forgive this freedom, and let me conjure you, my dearest friend, to be for the future more circumspect in your conduct. Repeated experience must have taught you, that there is something essentially wrong in your manner. It is a friend, and a friend only, that can point this out. Let me be that friend, qualified at least by intimacy and affection. It is the loose familiarity of your manner, and the unguarded turn of your expression, which have brought *all* your quarrels on your hands; not one is referable to any other cause. How often have I remonstrated with you on this subject, and warned you against your unfortunate propensity to point out the weakness and ridicule the follies of those around you? It is nothing to tell me that your heart is free from every spark of malice, and full of affection and be-

nevolence. Alas! my dear ——, I know this full well,—I *feel* it at this instant. If the world knew you as I know you, these remonstrances were idle. But you are daily exposed to the attacks of general slander, from those who neither know nor love you; and to the secret shafts of malice, from those who may find their interest in your overthrow. Reflecting on this, I often lament, with the deepest regret, that unaccountable waywardness of self-indulgence, by which you are bringing your foibles so frequently into view, to excite the wonder of the wise, the ridicule or enmity of the foolish; to deprive your virtues of their natural effect, and to cast a shade on the lustre of your abilities.

Once more let me crave your pardon. I have frequently determined in my own mind since you left us not to take any notice of this subject, and this was my intention when I began to write; but I found the matter too difficult, and presuming on your wonted kindness and indulgence, I have given form to those sentiments that struggled for utterance.

* * * * * *

I am happy to find by your letter that you have found some agreeable literary engagements. Idleness is the root of all evil, and more particularly destructive of ingenuous and cultivated

minds, who cannot be engaged with trifles, or satisfied with the laborious nothingness of dissipation and folly.

If you become a good Grecian, you will have reason to value yourself on an accomplishment rather singular. You will, in this instance, leave me far behind in your literary progress. I have begun to apply to it within these few years several different times: but I find I cannot now treasure up words without ideas in my memory, and I have given up the task in despair.

* * * * * * *

I am ever your affectionate friend,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 78.

To the same.

Liverpool, 1784.

MY DEAR ——,

I received the enclosed in course of post, which I now return, with three sheets of my own on the same subject, for your consideration.

When I first read over your manuscript, I was highly pleased with it; but, upon a little reflection, I found I was wrong. It is written with spirit, force, and precision; but it is not for the public — it is too warm. To write to the public the mind must be cool, because the public is

always cool. A man may be sarcastic and ironical, but he must not be angry, at least he must avoid angry expressions: fool, knave, and scoundrel, any porter can use, and can retort—the more just the application, the more light they will fall; and where least deserved, the most severely will they be felt. Therefore, a man of sense and honour is always, at the long run, a loser at this shuttlecock play.

A bystander is perfectly unmoved by the ravings of anger; and the human mind, where it is unconcerned, has a natural propensity to take part against those who are under the influence of passion. ——— does not know this, but you should.

* * * * * * *

Observe the satires of Junius—keen, caustic, and severe, but perfectly cool. Had you had reason for bitter resentment, these should have been your model. But really, on serious and impartial consideration, I think you have no business at present to be very much irritated. You feel, I am sure, none of that boiling indignation which the conclusion of your remarks expresses, and wherefore *should* you feel it? I would have you appear before the public with freedom and with dignity, and with such calm and moderate

resentment as the feelings of every reader would justify.

Before your manuscript arrived I had thrown together some thoughts on the subject, which on calm consideration had the same fault as yours; they were too severe. From the two I have made out a third, shorter than either, but whether more proper, you will judge. I have embodied in it such parts of both as I thought best. I preferred a letter to —— to an address to the public, which you will, I believe, approve. It is better to have two persons in the drama than three.

Let me entreat you, my dear friend, in the course of this business never to write or act in a passion. Nothing under heaven is so degrading as to return insult with insult, and to confound right and wrong in such a manner as to have no decided line of action.

Yours affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 79.

Extract from a Letter to Miss Cropper, dated May 23. 1788.

I am anxious about —— beyond what you will easily conceive. He has got the unhappy faculty of exposing his foibles to all the world, while his good qualities are only known to his friends, in whom, at the same time that they excite esteem and affection, they likewise produce anxiety and distress. Many a man with a tenth part of his good qualities has received the universal approbation of the public, by conforming in his exterior to the world's law. Prudence is a most potent quality. With it, the dullest head and the coldest heart may meet with general favour and good report; without it, the most generous temper, and the most brilliant abilities, will excite the envy of the weak, the malice of the wicked, and the united admiration and compassion of the good and wise. But I will not indulge in such reflections. My friend will yet do well — and why should I make you a sharer in anxieties which are not your own? Yet Heaven, which in mercy has mingled such

minds as yours in the mass of human beings, has not destined them to a state of repose. The most precious of its gifts cannot lie dormant. The sympathy that springs from generosity and affection must hope and fear, must joy and grieve; must sometimes shed the tears of happiness, and sometimes of sorrow. Yet do its blessings far overbalance its pains. If there be aught of value in mortal life, it arises from this gift of Heaven; and if there be happiness in a future world, from this it will spring, and in this it will centre. Such at least are my frequent reflections.

* * * * *

Dr. C——— is here. I sat up with him on Monday night till after twelve, disputing about metaphysics. He is a very ingenious man, but appears to me full of prejudices; the most troublesome of which is, a never-failing suspicion of the heart of every fellow-creature the moment it comes in contact with power.

We are all up in arms here about Sir William Dolben's motion, which pretends to say, that we shall only put one slave on board our ships to every two tons; whereas we have been used to put two men and a half to every single ton. We contend that this attempt is a most daring infringement of our privileges; that, as we may stow rum

and sugar as close as we can, so likewise ought we to be at liberty to stow human life, which is equally a commodity with the others, though somewhat more perishable. To be serious. — I am very sorry that this motion is made, because it will tend to divert into different channels that stream of virtuous enthusiasm, whose undivided strength might have swept the whole fabric of this villanous traffic from the surface of the earth.

I hope Miss Kennedy will answer this, and tell me how you are. As to yourself, I will not have any letters from you at present: I want no proofs of your friendship, and am not one of those beings whose regard feeds upon modes and forms.

Yours most affectionately,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 80.

To Francis Trench, Esquire, Woodlawn, County of Galway.

Liverpool, September 1. 1789.

MY DEAR TRENCH,

Your letter of the 19th was most welcome. I thank you for the particulars it contained, as

well of your feelings as of your journey. The sensations you describe on your return to "the hills of your native streams," I perfectly understand, having myself frequently experienced the like. There may be something unphilosophical in local attachments, but they are perfectly natural; and I cannot but think that the kindest hearts often feel them most strongly. Our affections, especially our early affections, are too warm to be governed by modes or forms: they extend from persons to things, from animate to inanimate objects; from the men with whom we live, to the ground on which we tread. With the review of the scenes of our infancy come a thousand recollections, some of them gay, more perhaps mournful or tender, but all "pleasing to the soul."

The wish you kindly express, that I should join you at Woodlawn, is no less mine than yours. That I should enjoy such a visit I am certain; first, because I should feel myself happy in the society of your father's family; secondly, because I should see green Erin, which I long to see; thirdly, because I should taste the pleasures of the country, of which I was always enamoured; and, fourthly, because I should, for the time, escape the busy hum of men, and get away from this pound-shilling-and pence so-

ciety, of which I am at times heartily sick. But what signify wishes?

* * * * * * *

Since you left us I have seen several remarkable people, who would have pleased you much. First came Mr. Lymburner, agent and ambassador from the province of Canada, deputed to the court and nation of England to obtain an English constitution. I asked him how the expression ran? He said he had formerly come to *petition*, and that he had gone back without his errand; that he was come to *obtain* this constitution, if possible, but at any rate to *demand* it. Lymburner is a quiet, still, modest, unaffected man, herculean in his make, and melancholy in his complexion. He gave me a very interesting account of the internal politics of Canada; of the increasing exertions of the spirit of liberty among the British inhabitants; of its contagious influence on the French; and of the present determined temper of the province. I listened to him the greater part of the night with high satisfaction, and could not help doing homage in my mind to a man, whose purposes were so great, and whose public character was so honourable. I saw plainly enough that I had at my table one of those calm but determined minds, that are sent to

burst the bonds of tyranny asunder, and to unite and direct the spirit of nations.

Next came Dr. Kippis, whom, perhaps, you may have heard of as many years director of the Monthly Review, editor of the Biographia Britannica, author of the Life of Cook just published, and at the head of the new college in the neighbourhood of London. Besides these recommendations, he had a farther one to me, from his being the person who first noticed, patronised, and pointed out the genius of Miss Williams. I found him an amiable, candid, and worthy man. He sat with me two evenings, and gave me a great deal of literary and political history that was highly entertaining. Kippis is particularly acquainted with authors, and with the mysteries of authorship; has been forty years employed in writing, judging, and reviewing; thinks himself well qualified to estimate talents, even from very small specimens; and mentions several instances, in which he has early given opinions which time has confirmed. From him I learned some singular traits of Lord Thurlow, with whom he was acquainted in the early part of his progress; — a man, I find, of some natural affections, but with a mind prejudiced and contracted, — surly, but without honourable pride; and though often growling and rebelling,

yet always kissing the rod. Kippis says, that to entitle him to the reputation of a great man, he has lived a century too late.

* * * * * * *

By this time I think I must have tired you; but I have not yet done. I have had a delegate to the National Assembly of France from St. Domingo with me; and we have had much talk, of various interesting kinds. I say nothing of it at present; but go and visit the banks of the Boyne, and bring me an account of the field of that famous battle that gave Ireland fetters, and England liberty and fame. You may deny the first part of my assertion, but what signifies your denying it? Your government is independent; but what is your government? — an English faction: the ancient nation is trampled and oppressed. Ye English Irishmen! the time is come when you may be just with safety; the time is fast advancing when there will be no longer safety in your being unjust. The lapse of a hundred years has secured your property; why will you enforce a monopoly of *rights?*

But go, I pray you, and visit the banks of the Boyne, — that hallowed spot, which the course of time renders every day more interesting; — where the champion of freedom beat down the supporter of arbitrary power, and established a

government founded on liberty, for the blessing of Englishmen, and for the example of the rest of the world. — But I must trust myself no farther; I long to see you again. Come, and let us talk these great subjects over: let us sit together over our evening glass, and cheer our hearts with those half-glances into futurity which present a brighter scene, when oppression shall be no more, — when the whole race of man shall enjoy halcyon days, and the lamp of liberty shall be lighted in every corner of the earth.

Write to me as soon as you receive this; and let me have two sheets of your conversation, as you now have of mine.

I am always, my dear friend,
Yours very affectionately,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 81.

To W. E. ———, Esq.

Liverpool, March 17. 1790.

DEAR SIR,

As you appear particularly desirous that I should put on paper my sentiments respecting the proper management of your constitution, I sit down to comply with your wishes. I have

nothing new to say; yet there may be some advantage in a regular though short discussion of the subject.

You have not the gout by hereditary right; it is of your own acquiring, and the excesses of the table have brought it on you. How may you expect to get quit of it, or at least abate its violence? By avoiding such excesses in future. This is common sense, and no one will deny it. But what is to be accounted excess? Different men will give different answers; and each will support his opinions by probable reasonings. The truth is, no general answer is applicable to every constitution, nor even to the same constitution under different habits of exercise, or in different periods of life. Where the gout has continued long, the life is far advanced, the strength much impaired, and yet considerable exercise is required, the doctrine of abstemiousness is to be applied with great caution; and if the frame be much emaciated, it is not to be applied at all. In such circumstances, a cordial regimen is the most safe, especially if it correspond with long established habits; because it is now too late to aim at abating the violence of the disease, and the object is to keep up the strength under it. Abstemiousness might suddenly lower this, and bring on complaints for

which the gout would be ill exchanged. But where the patient is young, the habits of excess of short duration, the constitution naturally good, and as yet unbroken; where the frame is corpulent, exercise not necessary, and therefore irregular, the precepts of strict temperance may be insisted on strongly and carried to a great extent. It may be applied with still greater confidence where the disease is not hereditary, but accidental, and has arisen altogether from pursuing a *directly opposite course.*

It will be easy to decide that your case comes under this last description. But, even here, temperance has its limits, beyond which it ought not to pass. After much attention to the history of your constitution, I endeavoured to assign these. I have seen nothing to alter my sentiments on the subject; but that there may be no misapprehension between us, I will shortly repeat the leading rules that were laid down for the preservation of your health: —

1. Rise early, and in summer ride an hour before breakfast.

2. Eat freely of animal food at dinner, but confine yourself to one dish.

3. Avoid all high seasonings of every kind, all strong liquors of every sort, and be cautious in the use of butter, oil, or vegetable acids.

4. Eat a sparing supper, and go cool to bed.

5. Use regular exercise, if possible; and ride, if not before breakfast, at least before dinner, many miles every fair day throughout the year.

Some persons conceive that if strong liquors be prohibited, so ought animal food; the first being necessary to the proper digestion of the last. But this is a mere prejudice. Things that have been long combined may perhaps not bear separation well, from the laws of custom, where the laws of nature are not concerned. Men, in almost every condition of society and regions of the earth, make animal food a principal article of their diet; but the *regular* use of spirituous or vinous liquors is confined to a few persons only in any country; and they are forbidden both by the laws of Mahomet and of Brahma to a large proportion of the human race. I am so far from desiring you to abstain from animal food, that I absolutely wish you to eat it freely once every day. I am not afraid of your indulging the cravings of your appetite, provided that it be not stimulated by heating condiments or strong liquors; and that it be not excited by that elegant but useless variety, with which modern luxury has covered the tables of the rich. Neither am I afraid of your drinking one or two glasses of wine *after dinner*, though I do not wish you to make a rule of the sort;

and it is clearly better to abstain altogether, than by taking a little to endanger the taking much. If a departure from this system is at any time allowable, it is when the body is undergoing extraordinary fatigue. A few additional glasses of wine may at such times be admitted, and, unless the frame be heated, they operate as a salutary cordial. This is the true use of wine. Happy had it been for our species if no other had been discovered!

These are the opinions I gave you eighteen months ago (not perhaps so distinctly) respecting your plan of life. You have not conformed to them exactly, but, to do you justice, you have adhered to them in a degree which I did not expect, and which is certainly not very common. Some experience we have of course had of this plan. What language does it speak?

You had the gout formerly four or five times in the year, and, when actual pain was not upon you, were distressed with flatulence, acidity, weakness of bowels, and oppression of spirits. And these symptoms you had at a time when you led a tolerably sober life; that is, such a life as most gentlemen in Liverpool lead now.

Since you have adopted a more strict regimen, your appetite and digestion have been good, your stomach and bowels strong and regular,

you have felt your limbs light and active, and have had a complete intermission of the gout for fourteen months; and though you are now suffering under another attack, yet this has been perfectly regular, and would most probably have been extremely slight, but for your expedition to P——, and your jollity there. You have, it is true, lost some weight, but you are still fat enough, and the flesh that is gone was only an incumbrance,—a load weighing down your spirit to the earth. Some of the ladies, you tell me, say your face looks for all the world like that of * * * *.

To be serious.—It requires not the wisdom of a Merlin to draw the proper inference from experience like yours. Go on in your plan of regimen. Be even more steady than before. Life is at best uncertain; the dangers that beset us are of various kinds. Live as you please, no man can insure you a year, a month, or a day. And if you should be soon called off the stage, (which, by the by is as unlikely in your case as in that of any man of your age,) there are some people will say you ought to have lived more freely. Nay, if you die in the course of the next twenty years, which the Insurance Offices will tell you is an equal chance, or even in the next forty, which I believe is three to one in

your favour, there are good-natured friends that will say that water-drinking was your ruin. But it will signify little to you what they say. When once you are fairly at rest, their babbling will not disturb your repose.

It has often struck me that we are too much the slaves of example. Few seem to understand the necessity of choosing a line of conduct for themselves. We pass through life too much like a file of soldiers, taking the word of command from the right-hand man, and marching exactly in the step of our fellows. By these means, all constitutions are treated alike, and many a man falls in the ranks, exhausted and motionless, who might have prolonged his march much farther, had his exertions been proportioned to his strength.

If we were disposed to allegorise on this subject, I think we might find a figure more appropriate. Instead of a *march*, let us consider life (as it has often been considered) as a voyage, — a voyage across an unknown sea. Here, every man pushes his bark off shore, knowing that it must at last sink under him, and that he must be thrown up, dead and naked, on the opposite coast. But as we are all desirous of performing as much of this voyage as possible *on the surface*, and as different barks are of different size and

strength, we should each of us consider the trim of the vessel under us, that we may carry no more canvass than she is able to bear. If we neglect this, we shall run the hazard of oversetting in every squall; or if we escape this danger, our ship may strain under the press of sail, her seams may open, the leaks increase, and we may find her foundering before half the voyage is performed. With every care, there are dangers which lurk unseen, — shoals on which we may run aground, and rocks on which we may strike and perish. These lie thick in the beginning of our voyage, and many, alas! find them before they are well off shore! * Our difficulties are the greater because we have not the clear light of day to steer by, but only the dim lustre of a wintry night. But, after all, he will in general make the longest track across the ocean, whose sails are trimmed with most skill and prudence, and who, amidst the storms that beset him, keeps coolly on his watch, the helm of fortitude in his hand, and the star of reason in his eye!

I am always, dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES CURRIE.

* My own sweet children pressed on me at that moment. (*Note* by Dr. Currie to the copy of this letter which he had kept. — ED.)

No. 82.

To Miss Anne Duncan, Lochrutton.

Liverpool, May 18. 1790.

MY DEAR AUNT,

Amidst the various delinquencies of which I have been guilty, there is not one with which my conscience more frequently upbraids me than my inattention towards you. My obligations to you are now nearly of thirty-four years standing; and though they are not all fresh on my memory, yet many of them are; and instances of your kindness mingle themselves with the earliest impressions that remain on my mind.

* * * * * * *

I can remember that you gave me a half-penny to put in the first breeches' pocket I ever had. I can remember, too, that once, when we were walking from Gretney together, and a shower of rain came on, you took off your own scarlet cardinal, and put it round me, leaving yourself exposed. Truth to say, I neither understood the kindness, nor received it as I ought. We had to come past Kirkpatrick School, and the boys were playing on the green, never minding the rain; and as we came by, they a' cried oot, "Ae! look

at the little manny i' the reed cardinal!" O! I was sadly mortified, and hard I struggled to get clear of the incumbrance; but, as I could not do this, I jumped into the burn as we crossed it, out of mere spite. It was many years before I saw this business in a proper light.

* * * * * * *

Well, I hope you will not deny any of this. If you do, I will send you twenty times more of the same kind. But I cannot send you any records of memory, in which you are concerned, on which I do not look back with pleasure, and with sensations of gratitude as well as of affection. There is a high satisfaction in tracing the impressions of infancy, when the heart was light, the curiosity strong, and the expectations gay and ardent. Time, as it flies, deadens our sensations; his "cold breath" chills our sensibility; and as we advance in years, we find our happiness to associate more with memory than with hope. There is, besides, a strong attraction in our early recollections from another source. They present to us the images of those whose virtues once so deeply engaged our reverence, whose kindness once so largely contributed to our happiness, and whom the stroke of Fate, that yet impends over us, has already mingled with the dust. But we will drop this subject.

* * * * * * *

Accept the assurance of my unalterable affection.

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 83.

To Mrs. R——, G——.

Liverpool, July 17. 1790.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I have been a good deal indisposed since I saw you, both with sickness and fatigue; and I have waited for an hour of tranquillity and leisure, to enter calmly on the interesting subject of our last conversation. In expecting this, I have been repeatedly disappointed; and one of the causes of my delay has been, that I have been called to *act* in more than one instance of that disease, on which it is now my business to present you with some general remarks. I wish it were in my power to give you more satisfactory information on the subject; but, indeed, my knowledge of it is extremely limited; and though I have consulted many writers, in different languages, with the view of increasing it, yet I have learned little that is useful from books, and

rest my hopes of farther knowledge chiefly on personal experience.

1. I begin with relating the manner in which the disease comes on, where it comes on gradually, as well in the first instance as in every subsequent relapse.

The first symptom observable, is generally a certain quickness of feeling, as to all points that wound pride or excite anger; with a diminution or loss of those softer traits of character, on which pity, affection, and benevolence are founded. With this fierceness is usually united a selfish and solitary turn; the person shuns all objects of cheerfulness, begins to mutter and talk to himself when alone or unobserved, takes up notions of being ill used by some one or other, and indulges sentiments of revenge, grows more and more fierce and intractable, *totally* loses his sleep, which had long been imperfect and delirious, and becomes insane.

Such is the general progress of this disease, as far as I have been able to trace it, where it comes on gradually. Instances occur where it is the effect of sudden and violent agitations of mind, and of extraordinary reverses of fortune.

In such cases, the temper and disposition are not, I believe, at the bottom so much injured, nor the *associations* so much distracted.

The last election produced me three cases of this sort, all of them on the winning side; and this recalled an observation of Mead, of a curious kind,—"That when the South Sea bubble burst, and many were reduced at once from opulence to extreme poverty, and some few were advanced as suddenly from poverty to great riches, several instances of insanity took place; but almost all of them among those who had been successful."

It would seem, then, that the vigour of reason gives way sooner under the impulses of extreme joy, than of extreme sorrow; and that Providence, knowing our frames, has acted wisely in making our trials, of the former kind, comparatively so few.

2. What means are we to employ to prevent a relapse, where this disease has once existed; or where, from other causes, danger of its occurrence may be apprehended?

To answer this fully, a volume would hardly suffice. All violent agitations of passion and fancy are carefully to be avoided; solitude, gloom, and idleness, carefully to be shunned; and the mind called out of itself, as the phrase is, as much as possible, by employments that exercise, while they do not exhaust. This last direction, indeed, includes all the rest. Steady and regular employment keeps down the wild-

ness of fancy and the turbulence of passion, and prevents the incursion of those trains of fancy, which, long indulged, break down the bounds of reason and sense.

Where, however, the mind has been long unpractised in directing itself, it loses that self-balancing power in which exertion originates, and that hardihood and force by which application becomes easy and advantageous. Here, then, gentle means are to be employed to influence to action; and indulgence is to be given to early weariness and fatigue. Something of childishness has returned, and our maxims must be formed accordingly. By degrees, exertion will become more easy, and the happy influence of habit be restored.

3. What are we to do when we observe any actual symptoms of the approaching disease?

According to the vigour and fulness of the patient, I sometimes bleed, and sometimes give cooling physic; and, at any rate, I restrict the diet to articles that are mild, if they are not cooling. But the great secret, for so I consider it, is to procure *sound sleep*. We have long known the influences of sleep on the body; but its salutary effects on the mind have been little understood. Sleep (I speak of perfect sleep) is the season when passion and imagination are

still and silent, and when *volition* strengthens by repose.

The leading symptom of the beginning disease, is disturbed and short-lived slumbers: the almost universal attendant on the *existing* disease, is obstinate and sometimes complete watchfulness. By procuring sleep that is sound, where it was fugitive and broken, the disease may *in general* be prevented: and by producing it, where the disease is formed, if it be not of long continuance, it may *in general* be cured. To speak of the various methods of inducing sleep, would lead to a very wide discussion. Opium I employ in doses from *one grain to one hundred*, according to the degree of excitement of the brain. But, in general, for the early stages of watchfulness, a dose of two grains is sufficient. A lady, a patient of mine, who has suffered three relapses of this disease, and who fell under my care about three years ago, keeps pills of opium, of two grains, by her; one of which she takes on the first accession of watchfulness; and by this simple means, she has preserved the health of her mind. It is necessary to counteract the effects of opium by magnesia, aloes, or castor oil.

Such, my dear madam, are my remarks on this disease, as far as a reference to the case in question requires. What I have said may need ex

planation or application; and I attend for the purpose of giving it as far as I am able; happy if I can, in any degree, contribute to the peace and comfort of one, of whom I will not speak as I feel, lest it should be imputed to me as flattery; but whose good opinion I esteem an honour, and whose friendship I consider as a blessing.

My much valued friends! — but stop — this is a consultation, and I will not indulge in sentiments which do not suit the occasion; and which, on all occasions, are better felt than expressed.

Adieu!

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 84.

Intended Letter to D—— H——, Esquire, Edinburgh.

Liverpool, Aug. 29. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 25th was very acceptable to me, of which my answering it a few hours after I have received it is a proof. I caution you, however, against the uneasiness that may arise from the notion that you are again so soon put into my debt. Doubtless, your correspondence is

highly valued by me, and the more so, as I can hardly say I have any other of a literary kind in Scotland. I would wish so far to keep it up as that we may meet with some acquaintance of each other's minds when we *do* meet, either in England or Scotland. But then there should be nothing of the nature of a task on either side; and though I should regret not to hear from you again within the year, yet should you not find, for twelve months to come, an hour of leisure that can be devoted to me, without restraint on inclination, do not, on that account, suppose it more difficult to employ such an hour in my service, whenever it may occur.

* * * * * * *

I am glad to find that we are approaching nearer each other on the slave-trade business. Had it not been so, I should really have given up some of my opinions on the benefit of free discussion; since repeated public examinations and denunciations of this trade by the first understandings, perhaps, in the world, had failed to make any impression on a superior and unprejudiced mind, upon a subject, to my apprehension, so clear, and involving so many and such unparalleled enormities. You do not like the way in which it has at length been carried; nor I that in which it has been so long

resisted. I allow the irregularity of the kind of exertions that were made in favour of the oppressed Africans; but I respect the generous impulses that produced them, and consider the whole proceeding as by far the finest feature of the present age. I include, and indeed distinguish in this praise, the debates in Parliament, which I think had a specific superiority as to the principles argued from, and a decided pre-eminence as to the eloquence and ability with which they were enforced, over any former discussion of that or any other assembly that I know of, either of the ancient or modern world. The conduct of the people in Scotland on the slave-trade was, I believe, new; but such conduct is common in England. A similar and a much more violent exertion fixed Mr. Pitt in his place in the year 1784, in opposition to the Parliament; and that was, in my judgment, a most salutary exertion. You would not confine the expression of public sentiment to the re-echoing of a royal proclamation? or, in the midst of an agitated world, bid freemen suppress their emotions of sympathy and suffering in silence, and give utterance only to the honied accents of assent and adulation? If our government be *representative*, it must represent the sense of the nation, and it ought to yield to that sense, calmly

and deliberately expressed. As it is constituted at present, it can resist every impulse of enthusiasm or popular delusion; but it must yield to general conviction, repeatedly and deliberately expressed. This state of things is, in my mind, far better than a legislature so powerful as to compel the nation to adopt *its* sentiments, if I may so speak, or so weak as to be compelled to fluctuate with every breath of popular opinion, however light and transient. On this supposition I doubt much of the practical benefit of an extension of the elective franchise; but if it is to be supposed that in the present delegation of members to the House of Commons the people completely delegate and give up their right of judgment, or of declaring that judgment, it then becomes high time, I apprehend, that the single medium through which their thoughts can be conveyed, should be pure,—at their command,—and at the command of no other. In a word, this appears to me a scheme of things that would justify the plans of the reformers, — annual parliaments, universal right of suffrage, &c. &c. I prefer things as they are to any measures of this sort that I have yet seen. Political, as a branch of moral, truth lies most commonly in the medium; and the medium in this case seems to coincide with the practice; having on the one

extreme a close aristocracy, and on the other an open and unstable democracy; between which, however, if I were compelled to choose, I would choose the latter.

On the affairs of France I will imitate your example, and say but little. The events of the 10th, the abdication of Lafayette, and the bloody and fierce spirit that prevails among the rulers, have certainly produced many desertions from their cause, in minds most sanguine in their expectations concerning them. For my own part, for two days after the news of the 10th arrived, I could almost have wished success to the Germans. I have again, however, settled into my former view of things, — that the French Revolution, with all its evils, is on the whole better than a continuation of the former government; that these evils would work their own cure, if left to themselves; and that they are lighter than a feather compared with the enormous evils that would result from a subjugation of twenty-four millions of men by foreign bayonets, and the success of a combination of despots, whose object (illustrated in their conduct to Poland), is to establish an universal tyranny on the ruins of liberty itself. That the attempt is as foolish as it is wicked, I am still obstinate enough to believe; and perhaps I shall be of the

same opinion, when Paris is razed to the ground. Events are passing so rapidly, that before we could discuss all the grounds of prophecy on one side and the other, time will probably have brought matters to issue. One general remark, however, I will offer; and, indeed, if it did not seem impertinent, I would press it on you. Great changes in human affairs cannot be produced without general union; and general union cannot be produced without an enthusiasm that never, in a single instance, stopped within the limits of reason or justice. Our own constitution was the offspring of fifty years' civil war, in which the prevailing party ran into greater extremes than even the Jacobins. Unfortunately, the same temper, talents, and conduct, that are fitted to pull down an established tyranny, are too apt, in every case, to pull down a regular government also. The earthquake in the moral world, which is able to overturn the deep foundations of the temple of superstition, shakes to pieces the flimsy edifices that are at the moment reared in its place; and the government of reason cannot be erected on stable foundations, till the dreadful agitations have subsided into a calm.

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After this, you will not be surprised if I agree with you in the praises you have given Professor

D. Stewart's work, *without your exception.* It never occurred to me to read a book that I so entirely assented to and so warmly approved; I mean a book on such subjects. The chapter on the application of first principles to politics (pardon me, and pity me, if you please) I consider as of first-rate merit; and so I find it is thought by some superior minds. I understand that the Premier and Lord Lansdown are of this way of thinking; the last I am certain in respect to, and I hear it of the first from good authority. And as to the application of first principles to politics, I have only to say, that if philosophers are not to apply their deductions to useful subjects, I see not what use their writings are of at all. But Mr. Stewart has in this respect great authorities on his side. First principles have been applied to law. Smith has given us the idea of a system of natural jurisprudence. They have been applied a hundred times to government, first in England, and afterwards in France. They have been applied even to the very subject of innovation, and with similar conclusions, by Bacon, the pride of English philosophy; and the use made of them by Mr. Stewart I consider as extremely able, safe, and well timed. I apprehend his chapter on this subject will tend to check the spirit of innovation. Mr. Stewart's

style is, as you say, of superior excellence: it is thought much to resemble Mr. Hume's.

It is now time, my dear Sir, to relieve you from this long tax upon your patience.

Yours most faithfully,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 85.

To Sir William Maxwell, Bart., Springkell.

Liverpool, March 16. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

It is not yet in my power to fix, positively, whether I shall visit Dumfriesshire this spring; but no light objection shall prevent me. The exact day on which I may be able to set out is still more uncertain than my journey itself; but I will endeavour to be with you on the 28th of April. In the mean time, I cannot but express my best thanks for the various and very important information in your excellent letter of the 19th of February.

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I am much indebted to you for the pains you have taken to inform me respecting the proposed bill of reform. I perceive, very clearly, that the

measure proposed is a half measure, and that its operation is doubtful. It seems clear, also, that it can only be considered as a link in a chain that must descend much lower; for no reason can be given why a vote should belong to a freeholder having one hundred pounds Scots valuation, that will not apply with nearly equal force to one having eighty pounds, fifty pounds, or even much less. Since this is the case, it might be, perhaps, as well to consider how far it is right to proceed along this chain in our advances towards a complete representation, or to employ some one more direct and perfect.

Two previous questions present themselves. The first, what ought to be considered as a complete representation: the second, whether, this being ascertained, it would be wiser to attempt it at once, or by degrees.

In forming our judgment respecting the first of these, I am aware that we ought to take for a basis some fundamental principle of natural right, level to the apprehension of all. Without this, our reforms can have no stability. You adopt, I see, the system of a representation of persons, extending to all men of a capacity to judge for themselves, and not subsisting on charity. This, I believe, is the system of the Duke of Richmond and John Jebb: it has been carried

into practice pretty exactly in the constitutions of America, and it is proposed for the new constitution of France. It certainly rests on a fundamental principle, and seems to preclude all farther attempts at reform. Nevertheless, I must confess to you, that the application of this principle to practice appears to me to be attended with many difficulties and some hazards. This scheme of equal representation is usually accompanied with the proposal for short periods of delegation, and other methods to make the delegate speak the sense of his representatives. But, under this system, the great majority of representatives being persons without property, the security of property to those who had it, would depend on the virtue of those *who had none*. If, on the other hand, it be supposed (what I am inclined to admit) that among a people considerably informed, and capable of fixed habits, such as our countrymen, the inviolability of property may be safely trusted to the *sense of right*, a danger presents itself of an opposite nature. Property being secured to the individual, however largely it may have accumulated, would probably operate with irresistible influence on the great mass of the labouring poor, of which three fourths of the electors would consist; and the union of two or three

men of large fortune, in every county or district, would bear down every opposition from talents, activity, or virtue. If I mistake not, something of this kind might be apprehended in every county in Scotland; and this leads one to conceive, that to make a reform radical and effectual, those mounds should be broken down that keep the landed property in such enormous masses. Whether a repeal of the laws of entail might alone answer this purpose, or some modification of those which regulate the descent of land, might also be required, I presume not to decide.

Supposing, however, those feudal relics effectually removed, which obstruct the principle of natural justice and general utility, and that property of every kind were merely protected by our laws from violence, but left to be accumulated by activity and industry, to be preserved by prudence, and to be dissipated by folly and extravagance, according to the order of nature, without a doubt, the enormous masses into which the surface of the soil is now partitioned, would in time diminish, and property as well as society arrange itself in its natural order. Inequalities must ever subsist, and great inequalities, because the character of the human mind is by nature unequal; but they would not extend to that degree

which conveys the influence of property into the hands, perhaps, of a hundred individuals. In my opinion, however (you can correct me if I am wrong), if every man in Scotland had a vote, the returns for the counties, while the land continues divided as at present, would be made by the overpowering influence of a smaller number than I mention. In towns, this might not be the case: and in extraordinary crises, the influence of property might give way to the influence of talents and character; but in the ordinary peaceable condition of society, my remark would, I presume, be just.

It seems, then, that an extension of the elective franchise should be accompanied with certain reforms in the laws of property. This being conceded to me, I confess I should still not be disposed to go the length of a representation of heads.

The young, the idle, the profligate, and those wretchedly poor and ignorant, form a large class of society, that do not sufficiently understand or sympathise in the interests of the whole; and those I would propose to exclude, in a great measure, by adopting another fundamental principle: giving the elective franchise, not to persons but to *families;* in a word, to the fathers of families only. Such men have a valuable stake

in the community, however small their property; and they are (not without many exceptions, indeed,) a selection from the general mass, as to sobriety and industry.

By adopting this principle, the greater and most dangerous part of the mob of great cities would be excluded: the greater part of the army and navy, and almost all the servants of great families; perhaps as vicious and dangerous a part of the community as any other, — beings who possess, at the same time, the vices of luxury and of ignorance.

This principle has in its favour, that the qualification is an obvious one, and requires little scrutiny; that it naturally recommends itself to our notions of propriety and our sense of right; and that it would influence in its favour by far the most powerful description of society. I might show that it is also recommended by many moral considerations; that it would operate as an encouragement to marriage, and to that sobriety and industry by which marriage and a family are supported.

You will say, shall the father of ten sons have no advantage over the father of one? To this I answer, that, in good time, these sons will marry, and thus give the patriarch a more extended influence. But, in order more fully to

meet this and other objections, I would go a step farther, and adopt another principle *in aid of my first:* I would also give a vote to every house of a certain dimension; that is, to the master of the house, whether a bachelor or married. Perhaps a qualification might be found *in all houses rated to the window-tax.* By this means, if the father of many sons had property, he might procure each a vote; if he had little, he might procure some of them votes; if none, one vote would be enough.

Besides all this, I would have a test. It should not be founded on the elector's confession of faith; I would not say a word to him on that point. But I would have the Bible opened to him at hazard, on the hustings; and before he gave his vote, *see if he could read.*

Such a test as I propose could be generally taken in Scotland, but not here. Of forty thousand electors belonging to Lancashire, this test would probably disenfranchise one half. I was called to Wigan the other day, and saw two or three thousand men burning Tom Paine, and shouting Church and King. Of the whole of this number, I was well informed there were not ten, who knew the alphabet!

You see my scheme: it is not in itself so perfect as yours; but it goes as far as human nature

will admit in its present rude state, in my humble judgment. Such as it is, it could not, perhaps, be safely adopted at once. At least, one would be cautious after what has happened in France. Had it been adopted there, however, instead of the more extended and more complicated one, much mischief would probably have been prevented.

Such speculations as these cannot be unimportant, because, if the present war do not terminate in the subjection and partition of France, we may all be called to act upon them.

The application to practice is that which is most difficult, and depends on circumstances that it is impossible to appreciate fully beforehand.

If, on the other hand, the league of despots prosper, our schemes of reform may sleep one hundred, or perhaps one thousand years.

In the mean time, the war is producing here the most fatal effects. The first merchant in Liverpool has failed, and many others must follow. Private credit is entirely at a stand.

The manufacturers of Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield, are altogether stagnant. God knows what will be the issue.

In London, the failures already amount to eight millions of money; and sixteen different

houses have failed in Bristol, one for half a million.

Such are the first fruits of this ill-omened war!

I beg to offer my very kind respects to Lady Maxwell, and to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson, who I am very sorry to hear are not to be with you in May.

I am, my dear Sir,
Yours most faithfully,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 86.

Extract from a Letter to Francis Trench, Esq. dated Liverpool, September 16. 1793.

"The bells are ringing for the capture of Toulon, which I consider as nothing at all to the purpose. Our situation becomes every day more and more perilous. There has been most bloody work in Flanders. I think there never was a time in which a wise man had more cause to be serious. The minds of men become daily more savage, and get inured to the horrible work of slaughter, of which every day brings

fresh accounts. What is to happen in this country I cannot tell. Vast bodies of men are preparing to emigrate, chiefly, as you may suppose, dissenters; but the threatened rupture with America may deprive them of this resource. At this instant German politics govern England, and the fate of the human race depends on the independence of France being preserved, frantic and guilty though she be.

I fear we shall have troubles in England. I should not *tremble* at the idea, if I were single like yourself. The actor in civil commotions, who can appeal to Heaven for the justness of his cause, and has nothing to fear but personal danger, is not in my eye an object of pity. But what one looks at with peculiar grief and sorrow is, the dissolution of all moral feelings on every side, the utter extravagance of jarring opinions and of conflicting crimes, and the danger of a brave and enlightened man being obliged in

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(*The remainder of the letter has been probably lost, as it did not come into the Editor's possession with the others to the same friend, after the death of the latter.*)

No. 87.

To Dugald Stewart, Esq., Edinburgh.

Liverpool, July 14. 1794.

DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of the 22d of June with great satisfaction. The very obliging offer you make me of a copy of your Memoirs of Dr. Smith, I am much flattered by. Every thing that respects so distinguished a man as Dr. Adam Smith is interesting, and the quarter from which his Memoirs come renders them more interesting still.

Accident has made me acquainted with many anecdotes of Dr. Smith, and many particulars of his private life. The Honourable T. Fitzmaurice, brother of the Marquis of Lansdown, who died in October last, was for many years of the latter part of his life a valetudinarian, and under my care. He was a man of singular habits and character, with some traits of a superior, though irregular, mind. His conversation turned much on his early life, and particularly on the period he spent under Dr. Smith's roof at Glasgow. Another source from which I have heard much of Dr. Smith, was the information of a Captain

Lloyd, who was much in his intimacy in France; and who passed the whole time that he spent at Abbeville with the Duke of Buccleugh, in his society. Captain Lloyd was bred a soldier, but left the army early. He is one of the most interesting and most accomplished men I ever knew. A scholar of extraordinary acquirements, perfectly polite, serious, simple, modest, and reserved. Dr. Smith and he, I could perceive from many circumstances, were on a footing of great intimacy; and many curious particulars of the Doctor's conduct he has related.

Dr. Smith, it seems, while at Abbeville, was deeply in love with an English lady there. What seems perhaps more singular, a French Marquise, a woman of talents and *esprit*, was smitten, or thought herself smitten, with the Doctor, and made violent attempts to obtain his friendship. She was just come from Paris, where all the women were running after Mr. Hume. She had heard that Mr. Smith was Mr. Hume's particular friend, and almost as great a philosopher as he. She was determined to obtain his friendship; but after various attempts was obliged to give the matter up. Dr. Smith had not the easy and natural manner of Mr. Hume, which accommodated itself to all circumstances. He was abstracted and inattentive. He

could not endure this French woman, and was, besides, dying for another. The young noblemen of the party (of whom there were several) used to amuse themselves with seeing so great a philosopher under such cruel embarrassment.

Though one is pleased to hear of particulars which prove that men eminent for great powers of reason and great acquisitions of knowledge, do not therefore lose the softer parts of their nature, yet I do not mention these circumstances as of a kind likely to be adopted by you in your account of Dr. Smith. Hearing, however, that you were writing an account of this extraordinary man, I thought you might be pleased to converse with Captain Lloyd, who is in himself most amiable as well as most enlightened; and, finding that he had an intention of visiting Edinburgh, I gave him a letter to a friend there, requesting him to find some means of introducing him to you. I believe Captain Lloyd did not make good his purpose. I understand he is now in Switzerland, but I have not heard from him since the time I mention.

I am happy to hear you are still going on with the important work, of which one volume has already appeared. I am altogether a pupil of the school of philosophy in which you take such a lead; and am of opinion, that a work

such as yours is of the greatest value — calculated to recall the world from a path that leads to chaos and darkness, and to make the enquiries concerning mind and its attributes, run in a parallel direction with that chalked out for natural philosophy by Bacon.

In England I am persuaded that the system of Dr. Reid gains ground, though till very lately it seems not to have been understood.

I hope you will not suffer your exertions to languish under the pressure of this dark and clouded horizon. The storm is too violent, I should hope, to last, though I fairly confess I do not yet catch a glimpse of sunshine through the thick clouds.

With the most perfect esteem,
I am, dear Sir,
Your obliged and faithful Servant,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 88.

To Miss Ann Duncan, Lochrutton.

Liverpool, 1794.

MY DEAR AUNT,

I do not know any one that flatters me more agreeably than my good and kind aunt. I can

declare to her, with great truth, that I am very sensible to her praise, and much gratified by any expression of her approbation. We are now very old acquaintance. Thirty-eight years are a long portion of human life. We have seen many changes, and participated in many sorrows, and I hope the mutual sympathy and affection between us will continue, while we are sensible either of pleasure or sorrow.

I am glad you think ——— in some respects improved. He is indeed a very fine young man, and I hope his time is not thrown away. I have not observed much *Anglification* about him, nor have I wished to see much. I like nothing so little as the awkward attempts of a Scotsman to be an Englishman. What comes naturally, where the disposition is a fine one, is always attractive in manners; and in this point of view, ———'s manners appear to me extremely engaging. But you do not like some of our ways. I must get him to explain this to me; and when you ask me why we should not be partial to our country, though there may be better and worse in both places, I join with you in the question, and assent to the observation, though the application must be made by him on his return. For my part, I assure you I love Scotland dearly: — I like her green vales, her clear streams, her

bleak mountains. As I travel north, I always watch the moment, and mark the spot (a little beyond Penrith), where Burnswark rises above the English horizon, and presenting itself the first object in Scotland, recalls at the same time the idea of my native country, and of the scenes of my early life.

Considering that I have lived but little in Scotland, and that I left it early, there is no man retains more of the partialities of a Scotsman than I do. Men, whose connections in infancy deserved and possessed a large portion of their affection, always, I observe, love their country.

But though I love my country and my countrymen, when I examine their claims to esteem rationally, I am obliged to abate for the moment some part of my regard. Whatever trouble an ambitious and unprincipled statesman has with Englishmen, with Scotland he has little or no difficulty. You are always ready to give your confidence to the minister for the time being. You supported to a man the mad American war, and even now, I am told, in spite of bloody experience, you are to a man supporters of this war, unexampled in the annals of Britain for expense, disgrace, and carnage.

When I reflect on what has passed, on what is

passing, and what in all probability is coming; when I observe the manner in which men's hearts are hardened, — I fold my arms in silent wonder, and suspect that the hand of Providence is raised against us. But you will say, Why should you think so deeply on such subjects? I cannot help it. The streets here are full of press-gangs and recruiting sergeants. This single county has already sent out 40,000 men since the commencement of the war, of whom by far the greater part have already fallen in battle, or perished by disease. How many mothers are childless, how many children are fatherless! And what have we gained but disgrace and defeat? But at Lochrutton I dare say you are all for peace; if not, you will have the charity to forgive one, who is sick at heart with our political follies.

I beg to be most kindly remembered to all my friends there, and hasten to conclude.

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 89.

To Dugald Stewart, Esq., Edinburgh.

Liverpool, September 15. 1795.

Dear Sir,

I have particular pleasure in embracing the opportunity afforded me, by the return of Dr. Hamilton, of acknowledging the obligations I have to you for the two publications you had the goodness to send me, and of expressing my very sincere esteem and respect.

I have received in the perusal of the life of Dr. Smith and of your Synopsis, equal pleasure and instruction. There is, perhaps, no man in the island who more thoroughly approves of your sentiments than I do. On the great points of abstract speculation which have so long exercised the ingenuity and divided the opinions of men, I am entirely with you; and I have felt in a high degree consoled and gratified to find your sentiments so frequently reflecting, improving, and strengthening my own. This coincidence of opinion I am the more flattered by, as it has taken place under a course of life and of education very widely different; and because the certainty

that your conclusions are the result of profound investigation, with every advantage of talents, of leisure, and of collateral science, serves to confirm opinions in which I might otherwise hesitate to repose, from a consciousness that they have been acquired under many difficulties and disadvantages.

While I assent with hardly a single exception to your speculations on mind and its laws, and to the conclusions which you deduce on morals and the first principles of politics, I think it probable that I have had more or less of your sympathy in the sensations, with which I have beheld the *practice* of our living politicians, and the scenes of guilt and folly by which Europe has been desolated.

On the subject of the war you perhaps know, that, under a fictitious name, I gave my sentiments at an early stage of the business, and when the peace of Europe was in the hands of our cabinet. I used a fictitious name (which I have often lamented), but I disguised neither my style nor my sentiments in a single instance; and to this circumstance it was perhaps owing that the work was ascribed to me.

Of the history of the letter of *Jasper Wilson*, I think it would be impertinent to say much to you. It originated in a private correspondence

with one of the most virtuous public men of the present day, by whom my sentiments on the subjects of that letter were requested, as they had before been on other subjects. Warmed by the vast and important views which were presented by this discussion, I suddenly determined on publication, hoping that the considerations, which had pressed with such weight on my own mind, might have some influence on the minister himself and the nation at large. I withheld my name from a wish to avoid appearing publicly as a politician, — a circumstance which at all times would have been injurious to my profession, and particularly so at a season of unexampled prejudice and passion. Had I foreseen that I was to be publicly attacked by name for a publication I had never avowed, I would have placed my real name on the title-page, and encountered the consequences.

It was the declared system of the adherents of ministry that every publication was to be traced to its real author. By these means only, their two great instruments of corruption and slander might be fully employed. On the application of these two methods of *carrying on the war*, if ever I have the pleasure of meeting you, I will give you some curious anecdotes.*

* Here follows an account of the attack of Mr. Chalmers.

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Pardon this detail. I believe you are not likely to think it so tedious as many might do; and since I have deferred public notice of the attack made on my character, I am not willing that the very few who are likely to think and feel with me, should be ignorant of the facts necessary to understand it.

Have you perused Darwin's Zoonomia? the only work of science which England has of late produced. It is in my mind a production of extraordinary ingenuity, but resting far too much on the imagination. You will perceive that the Experiments and Observations of my friend Dr. Wells on Vision have given a very severe blow to the foundation of his theory of the *sensual motions*, and reduced his celebrated doctrine of vision to mere chaff.

You will see this (if you have not already seen it) in the Appendix to Wells's Essay on Single Vision, in the Appendix to the Zoonomia in reply, and in two letters of Wells's in the Gentleman's Magazine for September and October, 1794, in rejoinder. I think this controversy extremely curious, and involving as many consequences, speculative and practical, as any I am acquainted with. I correspond with both of the writers, and am interested much in the

issue. Dr. Darwin cannot leave it where it is, without giving up the cause.

In the mean time Dr. Darwin is going on with the publication of his second volume, which is almost altogether medical, and will be practically of great value. I see the sheets as they come out.*

We hear nothing of the progress of your great work, which I earnestly hope is in progress, though the circumstances of the times sufficiently justify the suspension of the publication.

I have been reading Godwin's Political Justice, certainly in some parts profound, but in many superficial, and treading too lightly and too rapidly over the extensive field he traverses.

It seems also to me in its moral sanctions to be essentially deficient. I see no principle of action, but mere sentiment; and he who tells the author that his own happiness depends on conduct essentially different from that which he prescribes as good and virtuous, makes to him, in my mind, an unanswerable remark. God-

* In this second volume of the *Zoonomia*, Dr. Darwin has given some curious observations by Dr. Currie on the frequency of the pulse, which sometimes occurs in sleep (p. 397.); and also mentions Dr. C.'s experience of the effect of swinging or riding on horseback in retarding the pulse (p. 482.). *Editor.*

win's doctrines are nearly those of the ancient Stoics, deprived, however, of the sublime theology of that wonderful sect, which gave their whole system consistency.

We are about to have from the Liverpool press a Life of Lorenzo de' Medici by Mr. Roscoe, a particular friend of mine. It will be a work of great authority as to facts, a friend of the author having spent a considerable time in collecting original documents, and copying MSS. in the Florentine and other Italian libraries for him. Yet it is far from being so good a work as the author could have produced, being composed under engagements of the most pressing and most various nature.

Altogether, however, I think it will be highly worthy of your perusal; and in reading it you will have the pleasure of reading the work of one singularly virtuous and amiable. It will be out in about six weeks.

Is there any literary production of consequence expected to issue from your quarter? Edinburgh is now reported to be an armed city, and grave professors are said to have grounded their pens and shouldered their muskets. Here we have nothing of this kind. This single county has at least sent into the field 50,000 fighting men, but there is not one volunteer corps

through its whole extent. After withdrawing such a number of men from manufactures, there is full employment for what remain, at about two thirds of their former wages; and the manufacturers who have stood their ground, being freed from much competition, are well contented with their present profits. In the mean time, the loss of such a number of hands is sensibly felt in getting in the harvest, which this year has come on very rapidly, and from three shillings to four shillings per day are given to the reapers even in the remote parts of the county.

My friend Mr. Houlbrooke informs me that there is some hope of seeing you here. This would afford real pleasure to several persons, and to none more than myself.

With very sincere respect,
I am, dear Sir,
Your faithful servant,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 90.

To ——— ———, *Esq.*

Liverpool, October 31. 1795.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Though I cannot expect that any observations of mine, at this distance, can have much

weight in deciding your conduct in the delicate circumstances you describe, yet I hasten to answer your letter, lest I should seem to refuse the consolation I have so often received.

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In the case of hereditary successions, nothing is more delicate than for an heir-apparent to interfere in the disposition of a property that is eventually to be his; for no man likes to see that another is speculating on the issue of his death, and recreating his imagination with projects that cannot be realised, till he is himself mouldering in his grave. The older a man grows, the more irritable he becomes on points such as these, because jealousy increases with the consciousness of increasing weakness. Your grandfather is no common man; but he must be a very uncommon man indeed, if he is exempt from this natural and delicate infirmity.

If this be true in regard to the eldest son, the heir-apparent, it is more strikingly and universally true with regard to a person not legally entitled to an inheritance, but whose expectation of it rests on the supposed disposition of one, to whom his relationship places him only in the same degree of affinity with several others, and from whom, if he expects a legacy at all, he must expect it as a favour. In the eye of a

testator the disposition of his property on the event of his death, without his knowledge or consent, by a person so situated, will naturally appear as an unpardonable act of presumption, and he will infallibly be led to turn in his mind the best and most effectual mode of punishing him. A story in point occurs to me, which I will tell you.

Near my father's house lived ——— * of ———, an old and childless man of eighty years of age. His heir-at-law (and his nearest relation) was ——, with whom he had always been on the happiest footing. This person took care to be very shy in interfering with Mr. ——'s affairs, and never gave advice but when it was asked. He knew that the whole estate was left to him, by information of the solicitor, and was the more on his guard. At length Mr. —— was taken extremely ill, and at his age, little hope was entertained of his recovery. —— was sent for, and rode over with one of his sons; but at the time of his arrival Mr. —— was supposed to be asleep, and it was doubtful if he might ever awake. His kinsman was an excellent man; but it cannot be imagined that his grief was extreme on the near prospect of an event, that

* For obvious reasons the names in this narrative are suppressed.

should remove the good old man to a place of rest, and put *him* in possession of 3000*l.* per annum. He and his son walked out together to wait the event of Mr. ——'s slumbers. The mansion was an old feudal fortification, and the grounds were laid out in the style of the last century. The father soon began to converse on the alterations that might be proper on an issue which seemed at hand. Nothing was more natural. They agreed not to take down, but to alter the front of the house; but they differed in opinion as to the specific alterations; and as fathers and sons will sometimes do, they fell into a dispute and talked vehemently. Old —— had got out of bed on awaking, and was seated at a window in an arm-chair, expecting his friend and cousin ——, who, utterly unconscious of this, was disputing with his son directly in his sight and almost in his hearing. He suspected the subject of their conversation, which was confirmed to him by his gardener. He received ——, however, with his usual civility; but next day he sent for his lawyer, and altered his will, leaving the whole of his property to ——, a nephew of his kinsman, whom he had hardly ever seen; and after reciting the circumstance already mentioned, as the cause of this alteration, he left (in an expression of some insult) a pipe of port to ——, and a dozen to each of his sons,

to keep up their spirits under the disappointment.

* * * * * *

For the reasons which I have stated, I should therefore certainly respectfully, but firmly, decline your father's proposal; nor can I suppose that a man of his excellent sense and good feelings will persevere in his request, upon fully understanding the grounds of your refusal.

I shall not mention the subject, nor show your letter to any one, as I think family differences cannot be too much concealed.

You will have heard of the troubles in London. Our friend C—— writes me word that they were much more tremendous than is represented. Peace is at a distance; want and clamour increase. I fear bad days are coming.

Yours always most truly,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 91.

To William Roscoe, Esq.,

Liverpool, January 25. 1797.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have perused *The Nurse* * with attention, and, on the whole, with much pleasure. I see

* A translation of *Tansillo's La Balia.*

nothing either in the general impression it is likely to produce, or in the effect of particular passages, that should prevent your publishing it, or, indeed, render the measure doubtful. You must not, however, expect that it will increase the reputation of the biographer of Lorenzo de' Medici. It is enough that it is not unworthy of him, and that you give it to the world, as the truth is, not as a laboured effort of your talents, but as the occasional occupation and amusement of a vacant hour, in the midst of more serious engagements. The versification is easy and flowing, and possesses considerable variety. Your numbers rise and fall with the sentiment they embody, which is generally, but not always, distinctly expressed. I think you have a few lines which might have been improved by a little care; but it is perhaps well to exhibit in some cases the marks of a little negligence, to heighten the general effect. The compliment to the Duchess of Devonshire, which every body will read and quote, is very fine. The four lines beginning, "So Venus," &c. &c., are singularly beautiful; but I wish you had been *prompted* by the muse to a better or smoother termination. My objection is to *prompts the aim;* it is not, however, very material.

The prose in your preface and notes is, as usual, easy, luminous, and correct. I see nothing

to object to as to sentiment, and little or nothing as to style. Yet you have, I think, got one or two Latinisms. Why should Nanza *concede* the *MSS.* It might have been as well to have *delivered* them, or perhaps still better to have *given them up*, p. 10. In the same page, line 10., you use *adverts to*, as I suspect, for *mentions;* and in p. 14. *adverted to* is certainly employed for *detailed*, *examined*, or *discussed*. You are very fond of *adverting*.

I have only farther to observe, that it will be wished by the ladies that you had translated the quotations in the notes as well as in the preface. I have no doubt *The Nurse* will make some noise.

Herewith I send you the poetical remains of poor Burns. His correspondence, which occupies 600 folio pages, will follow. It contains a few scattered verses also.

Do me the favour to read these pieces with the pen in your hand, and mark an *a* or any other letter under such as you think may be printed. If any observation strikes you as you go on, pray write it on a separate piece of paper. I am sorry to occupy you, but I should be still more sorry not to have your opinions.

I write with my foot in the stirrup, but will see you to-morrow. Adieu.

Yours ever,

Thursday, 2 o'clock. J. C.

No. 92.

To the same, in London.

Liverpool, February 22, 23. 1797.

My dear Friend,

I received your kind and particular letter this morning; and I take, as you see, a large sheet of paper to reply to it; on which I shall from time to time make an observation or two till it be full; when I will transmit it by post. The present moments are infinitely critical, and since we cannot converse together, we may correspond.

* * * * * * *

I am glad you have been at Dr. Moore's, and that Mrs. Roscoe was with you. Mrs. Moore is a most uncommonly amiable woman, and one that Mrs. Roscoe would much like as an acquaintance. I hope Lord Orford will yet recover; — pity that you and he should meet, and death interfere to spoil the party.

I am happy to hear you are so frequently with the Marquis of Lansdown. If you do not write to me what passes in the interesting conversations you hold, (which, indeed, I neither expect

nor wish,) I hope, however, that you will not neglect to take minutes every evening. I do not mention this to you with a view to the future gratification of my curiosity, for it may be altogether improper, for aught I know, that it should be gratified; but because, at the most awful period of our national affairs, you are admitted into the familiar conversation, and, perhaps, the confidence of most extraordinary men: of men who will be soon called to the helm, or the nation will see dreadful calamities; of men who will live in history, whatever may be their fortunes, and who match in talents whatever is most splendid of our own or of former times. To record their views and their sentiments at the present moment will be most interesting to yourself, when the recollection may fade on your memory; and will be most interesting to your children, if to no others, when *we* shall sleep with our fathers.

That the Opposition should have no certain system does not surprise me. They are too few to have influence in either House, if the people at large are not with them; and while the nation seems stupid and silent on the very gulf of destruction, what new means can they devise to rouse it from its torpor and secure its co-operation? The opposition must be anxious to hear what the people wish, and how they are

disposed, in a situation in which the faculty of speech seems to have deserted them. It is on this disposition only that they can form any rational plan for our safety.

The perpetual false alarms that have taken place on the excitement of administration for some years past, have exhausted, if I may so speak, their *alarmability*. The immense rise in the value of almost all articles of merchandize during the war, has enabled the merchant to increase his profit; not merely by the rise which the article sustains while in his hands, but by laying a profit on it proportioned to its higher value. The higher-priced an article, the easier the price may be raised. When beef was four-pence halfpenny per pound, the raising it to five-pence occasioned great murmuring. When it was two-pence per pound (which it was here about forty years ago), a lady told me that raising it to two-pence farthing almost occasioned an insurrection. But it has been raised since the beginning of the year from sixpence to seven-pence without the least opposition. The merchants here have lost forty thousand tons of shipping since the war, but they are content: the underwriters have paid the loss, who are again reimbursed by the rate of insurance, which is laid on the price of the article, — and thus the whole

falls on the consumer. Such has been the case hitherto. I am, however, told, on unquestionable authority, that our merchants who have withdrawn in whole or in part from business, and who may be considered as monied men, have taken a great alarm. Purchases are no longer made in the funds even at their present prices; and orders have been sent up to London to sell out without restriction within these few days, to a great amount, by a class of men who hitherto have been most notorious for unlimited confidence. In consequence of this, a principal banker told me that money had flowed back on him so much that he was absolutely at a loss what to do with it; as he for his own part would not purchase another sixpence in the funds, and could not lend it out on commercial adventure in the present state of things. Thus large sums are beginning to rest in the bankers' hands, without the power of converting them to account, from the hazard of all methods of employing it; and the friend I allude to, told me that he had hinted to several persons his wish that they would take their own money, and employ it in their own way. This state of things is altogether unexampled; and will, if it continues, raise the comparative value of all real property. When the lowness of the price of the stocks

operates on that selfish animal, the monied man, rather as an alarm for what he holds than an encouragement to purchase more, a new condition of things is begun, and I leave you to judge what its effects must be on the resources of our minister. But why do I say all this to you? Doubtless it has occurred to you long ago, and to the enlightened persons with whom you converse.

In regard to the lower classes of people here, I am informed, on evidence that seems as good as the subject well admits of, that a great change has been for some time taking place in their sentiments, and that they are becoming even clamorous against the war. But they are a poor, hungry, diseased, and dispirited class. I speak by comparison, — for the poor here are better off than in many other places. They have totally lost the character of a "bold peasantry," such as Goldsmith alludes to, and seem to be in a state of *indifference* at least towards the fate of their country. To give you a proof of their temper, a great number of those ballotted for the militia have run away, and the price of a substitute, demanded last Saturday, for the supplementary militia was twenty guineas. In consequence, the deputy-lieutenants (I speak on the information of one of them) are going to

As I am myself growing old, I cultivate, as much as I can, a disposition to enjoy the happiness of younger people; and I do believe that one great advantage of having young people in whom we are interested is, that it prolongs, in some sort, the warmth of youth, and prevents the blood from cooling, and the heart from freezing, amidst the snows of age.

* * * * * * *

I am much obliged to you for mentioning Miss Keir. Through the haze of twenty years I look back upon her with kindness and gratitude: she is an excellent woman; may her remaining years be peaceful, and her transition to a better world easy and happy! When you see her, let her know that I have still the watch she gave me in Edinburgh, which I once shewed to her celebrated brother*, and that I have lately had it new gilded and repaired, intending it as a present to my son William. * * * * * I hear a very favourable character of ——. If she be a woman of the discernment I suppose, she will learn to appreciate —— properly. To have such a tutor to a young man as he will make, is no common blessing to parents who wish to have their son receive instruction, not by precept only,

* The friend of Watt.

but by the silent, though much surer, way of example.

Adieu, my dear aunt: assure yourself of my kind remembrance, and of my unalterable affection. When I think of you, the idea recalls friends long in their graves; and time, which wears away fainter impressions, makes others more deep. Receive, then, for yourself my true regard; and receive also some portion of those sentiments of tenderness and veneration which I owe to the best of women *, whose representative on earth I always consider you, and after whom I look with humble hope. Once more adieu.

J. C.

No. 94.†

To Dr. William Wright, F.R.S.L. and E., Edinburgh.

Liverpool, Nov. 21. 1799.

My dear Sir,

I hope to enter very particularly with you on medical subjects before long; and I should be stupid indeed, if I did not endeavour to profit by

* Miss Duncan, mentioned in the early part of the narrative.

† This letter is published in the Memoir of Dr. Wright, noticed Vol. I. p. 218.

your power, as well as by your inclination, to serve me.

I have received my friend Wells's powerful pamphlet*, and have read it with emotions of sympathy and admiration. It is like the man,—in some respects even superior to what I expected. No argument can be put more clearly, nor urged, I think, with more energy. It is impossible but that those against whom it is directed, must wince under the flagellation they have received, which they will neither know how to submit to nor how to repel. It is not possible but that they must shrink under the chastisement of such an adversary, or that they should bear him any other sentiments than those of inveterate enmity, springing out of the mixed sensations of fear and hatred.

I fear my high-minded friend has taken a very imprudent step; and I cannot but calculate the consequences to himself as likely to be injurious. Since he has gone so far, I wish, however, he would publish his book, to prevent the misrepresentations which will otherwise be affixed to it. I hear the lawyers are highly pleased with

* "A Letter to Lord Kenyon, relative to the Conduct of the Royal College of Physicians of London, posterior to the Decision of the Court of King's Bench in the Case of Dr. Stanger, 1799."

it, especially with the part in which he lashes our profession, which, I confess, I thought too severe. It seems to me that he has avoided, very successfully, the imputation of disrespect to Lord Kenyon.

What think you of the style? I thought it very superior. What he says of you is universally, I find, thought extremely to the purpose, and has occasioned in Sir L. P. great uneasiness. So I was told by a London lawyer a few days ago. How beautiful is the eulogium on Heberden!

You must know that Wells and I were schoolfellows, and slept a long time in the same room. I know him, of course, well, and am deeply interested in him. The man is singularly noble,—brave beyond all sense of fear,—ready to sacrifice his life to serve any generous purpose,—and not capable of a mean or base thing to save his life. He has the corresponding faults,—an unbending pride, unaccommodating manners, inflexible determination, a disposition to act solely under the impulse of his own lofty spirit, and to scorn the consequences, whatever they may be. With all these obstacles to success, such is the strength of his talents, that he would rise to the first rank of society, if the life of man were lengthened to twice or thrice its present duration. I wish he

could get a professorship in your University: there he would shine, and he could lecture on any branch of science.

Pray excuse all this: I write in confidence.

Your much obliged friend and servant,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 95.

To Walter Scott, Esq., (now Sir Walter Scott, Bart.), Edinburgh.

Liverpool, Nov. 28. 1800.

SIR,

I should sooner have answered your letter of the 18th October, had not the occupation of my time, with other pressing objects, deprived me of the leisure necessary to make the examination into the MSS. of Burns, which a compliance with your request required.

The unfortunate bard never arranged his papers: the only division made of them has been into poetry and prose, and the subdivision of poetry into such as was written by himself, and such as was communicated to him by others. In this last division only could be expected any of the objects of your research. It is extensive: a great part consists of poems in the Scottish dialect, addressed to Burns himself, in general

indifferent enough; and the rest, of poems of various kinds, some of them of considerable merit. I doubt if there be any that will suit your purpose; but I will give you a short notice of such as seem to approach your description.

(*Here follows the notice, which it has not been thought necessary to insert, being of some length.*)

I have read your "Green Ladies" many a time; it is a very noble poem: I doubt, since the days of Gray, if any thing has appeared of equal force and sublimity. It is happily varied, too: there is great beauty of description, correctness, as far as poetry admits, of manners, and a happy flow of versification. I long to see more of your poetry.

I am much obliged by what you say of the manner in which I have executed the task I undertook for the family of Burns. I wish you had detailed your observations a little, and wish it still, if your leisure will permit. The first edition, of two thousand copies, is gone; a second of the same number is just issuing from the press. The family have an interest in three editions, if there should be so many.

Excuse haste.

I am, with much respect,
Your faithful servant,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 96.

To the same.

Liverpool, July 2. 1801.

DEAR SIR,

* * * * * * *

I am happy you are going to intersperse your poems in your projected publication *, where they will appear to much greater advantage when relieved by the real language, manners, and poetry of the "olden times."

* * * * * * *

I am glad you have a copy of the old ballad, "I wish I were where Helen lies." I have seen the tomb of the lover, Fleming, a thousand times. Kirkconnell church-yard, and Kirkconnel Lee, the scene of this story, are in the parish where I was born, and of which my father was clergyman. They are on the banks of the little river Kirtle, my parent stream. I hope your verses introduce this sweet stream: if they do not, I wish you *would make them do it.* It is a wizard scenery all round. There are, within half a mile, two old towers, inhabited each by a bogle or brownie, very active spirits in my younger days, but now seldom heard of, as I was told when last in the country. The house of Springkell, belonging to Sir William Maxwell,

* *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.*

is below Kirkconnell church-yard, on the same river Kirtle, about half a mile, and Sir William has allowed a wash-house to intrude itself into the vicinage of the church-yard, the scenery of which is in all other respects dark, solemn, and awful. The church itself has long been in ruins, but the cemetery of the family of Springkell is there; and a finer situation for a burial-ground cannot be conceived. Kirkconnell Lee (part of which is the church-yard) is a holm* round which the river winds in a semicircle. The opposite bank is high, steep, and woody. Here was concealed the murderer; and hence flew the arrow, or shot, which pierced Helen Irving's heart.

While I was on a visit at Sir William Maxwell's, many years ago, I wandered out alone one summer evening into this beautiful and solemn scene; and here, strange to say, I met with a ghost!† This is not the only ghost I have seen in my time; I met with another in Wales. I have often told the story of my Welsh and Scottish ghosts in conversation; and if I

* *Holm.* "The level low ground on the banks of a river or stream."—See *Life of Burns.*

† This incident is related in the beginning of the Memoir. Vol. i. p. 53. It will be seen that what is here said of ghosts must not be taken literally. The occurrence in Wales was as naturally accounted for as that at Springkell, although attended by circumstances equally fitted to shake the nerves. The Editor would not have thought it necessary to insert this caution, but for the suggestion of a friend, whose judgment he respects.

had now time, I would commit the whole to writing, in hopes that they might fall on some combustible part of your fancy, and perhaps kindle a blaze there.

I am glad that you have any notice of Annan Water: I am myself of Annandale, — born within a short distance of that beautiful river, on the banks of which stands the residence of my ancestors, now in possession of Colonel Dirom.

I hope *your* Annan Water has some locality in it; if it has not, it ought to have. I have some sort of recollection of the stanzas you quote. I once in my early days heard (for it was night, and I could not see,) a traveller drowning, not in the river Annan itself, but in the Firth of Solway, close by the mouth of the Annan. The influx of the tide had unhorsed him in the night, as he was passing the sands from Cumberland. The west wind blew a tempest, and brought in the water three "feet abreast," as the expression is. The traveller got upon a standing net, a little way from the shore: there he lashed himself to the post, shouting for half an hour for assistance, till the tide rose over his head! In the darkness of night, and amidst the pauses of the hurricane, his voice, heard at intervals, was exquisitely mournful. No one could go to his assistance;

no one knew where he was: the sound seemed to come from the spirit of the water. But morning rose, the tide had ebbed, and the poor traveller was found lashed to the pole of the net, and bleaching in the wind. This is almost the earliest thing on my memory: I was with my father's family, at sea-bathing quarters, in a cottage immediately on the shore.

The third edition of Burns is now in the press. The two first consisted of two thousand copies each, so that the sale has been great. An American edition is printed.

When you have leisure, it will give me pleasure to hear from you.

I am, dear Sir,
Your faithful servant,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 97.

To Mrs. Rathbone, Greenbank.

Liverpool, June 25. 1801.

MY DEAR MADAM,

* * * * * * *

When I think of these children of yours, and of my own children, advancing so fast into life; when I think what they were a few years ago, what they will be a few years hence, I feel that the generations of men are, indeed, "the leaves

of autumn;" or I view them, with another great poet, as the waves of the sea, chasing each other down in succession, and lost for ever! In this delightful season thoughts of this kind crowd upon me. The summer is passing:—how few are our summers when the whole are numbered! how rapid is the flight of time! how serious the thought that it flies the swifter, the longer it flies!

I do not often give expression to feelings of this nature, nor am I quite sure that it is often safe or proper. But to such reflections you are not, I believe, a stranger; and the state of my family for some months past * has, perhaps, made them more familiar with me than usual. I have seen one virtuous and feeling heart set to rest, as all our hearts shall be when a few years are over.

> "Sigh not ye winds as passing o'er
> The chambers of the dead ye fly:
> Weep not ye dews; for these no more
> Shall ever weep, shall ever sigh."

Adieu, my dear madam: if this letter be not a proof of my wisdom, let it, however, be an evidence of my confidence in you; and let it also convey to you the assurances of my grateful and affectionate respect.

JAMES CURRIE.

* One of his sisters had recently died under his roof after a lingering illness. *Ed.*

LETTERS TO T. CREEVEY, ESQ., M.P.

LONDON,

IN 1802 AND 1803.

Nos. 98. TO 103.

Reflections during the short Peace with France. — Mr. Fox. — Declaration of War. — Buonaparte's conference with Lord Whitworth. — Ireland. — Case of English detained in France. — Maritime Code as to right of Search.

No. 98.

Liverpool, November 16. 1802.

My dear Creevey,

Accept a thousand thanks for your long letter, and be assured I do not flatter you when I call you the prince of correspondents.

What a strange situation is the world got into! This France puzzles me in the extreme.—One thing I foresee, we may not have actual war for a year or two, but we shall not have any thing like settled peace; and in the end, we must buckle to the hardest contest that we have ever yet endured.

It would be madness for us to go to war at present, especially on any point yielded by the treaty of Amiens. To resist that treaty would be to begin with a breach of faith, which would rouse France against us, and the Continent also, —the very thing Buonaparte wants.

Then again, our fleet is dismantled, they say, and our seamen are scattered: it would require eighteen months to get it into its former formid-

able state, perhaps more. *Then*, there appears a brilliant thing for us to do; that is, to block up the harbours of France, and to make the enraged consul grin within his own domain. Such a measure would, in the end, produce the ruin of the French colonies, which are yet too unsettled to support themselves without direct and constant intercourse with France. Without such intercourse, they would wither and fall off: for France cannot again render them impregnable by the emancipation of the negroes, — the negroes whom they have abused, betrayed, and murdered.

But here comes the back-game of this devil of a consul. He would attempt to carry on the trade of France under neutral flags, — under Russian, American, Danish, and Swedish. We should resist, and take the ships of these nations, or our blockade is not worth a farthing. Then he makes common cause with them, and involves us in all the unsettled and difficult and dangerous questions respecting neutral bottoms; holds us out as the tyrants of the sea, and contrives to get us shut out of the ports of the continent. And all this he will do with vastly more ease, if, as I said before, we begin a war with a breach of faith. Then come new taxes, — perhaps the odious income tax, — the people dissatis-

fied, disappointed, disheartened; the revenue failing; the funds sinking, &c. &c.

No—upon my word—mortifying as it is, we have no game at present to play but to give the Consul rope enough, and to see if he will not hang himself. The Grenvillites, Windhamites, &c. accuse the peace of all this. It should be eternally retorted on them, that the whole is to be imputed to their accursed war, which rendered such a peace the least of two evils.

The thing to guard against, however, is losing the proper sympathies for your own country in reflecting on the men and measures by which she has deen disgraced. After all, you must be decidedly English, decidedly Anti-gallican; for in our constitution, and still more in our habits, and in our criminal jurisprudence, are to be found the only solid system of practical liberty and justice which the old continent contains.

On the whole, one might support Addington, if he would allow his cause to be done justice to; but his sticking to Pitt ruins every thing.

* * * * * * *

Yours faithfully,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 99.

Liverpool, November 27. 1802.

My dear Creevey,

I have been quite delighted with the report of your debates. I rejoice that you have Fox, that first of animals, still in your front. He is a noble creature, but has been eternally sacrificed by his own goodness of heart, to the selfishness and folly of those around him. To think of faculties so superior being devoted to a little purpose; to think of a man fit to make England and Europe listen and obey, being asked to lead the drunken mob of Sir Francis Burdett, or to fight election squabbles in a committee, that are as unimportant, and that must waste his talents and consume his time; and then the culpable indiscretion, with which people abuse his confidence and open sincerity of heart! I vow to God I was sick on hearing an anecdote of the indiscreet and despairing way in which he spoke of English liberty: but now, when I see the manner in which he speaks and acts in the House, — see him so prudent, so moderate, and so wise, I recognise him still as the first of *Englishmen*,

and believe the story to have arisen from some mere ejaculation of sensibility and of melancholy, to which, God knows, circumstances might easily give rise. — How foolish it is to report such things, which, when reported, his enemies must hear, and which are more precious to them than "hidden treasure!"

* * * * *

Yours ever,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 100.

Liverpool, May 21. 1803.

MY DEAR CEVEY,

A thousand thanks for all your attentions, which have not only been most acceptable to me, but the means of gratifying many of your other friends. The Declaration you sent me was the only one in town yesterday, excepting one which the mayor had from General Gascoyne. His was sent to the Athenæum, mine to the Lyceum; and so the whole town had an opportunity of admiring the eloquence and wisdom of our governors.

I read this Declaration of War with attention and with considerable impression; and this morning I

have been reading as much of the correspondence as is contained in the *Sun*. The effect of this has been rather to weaken the impression in favour of ministers arising from the Declaration. It is impossible for me to tell you how I feel on the whole subject. I endeavour to reflect, but with little coherence. I sigh at the thoughts of the evils which are impending, and which might have so easily been averted. I lament over the folly of our species, and am tempted perpetually to exclaim with Oxenstiern, "With how little wisdom are the affairs of nations conducted!"

It does not appear to me that either government wished for war; but certainly, towards the latter part of the negotiation, the reluctance to hostilities seems much greater on the part of the French government than on ours. It appears to me, also, that the irritations of our press have had more share in producing war than any other single cause; and that Peltier and other periodical writers have the chief merit on this bloody occasion. I think that Buonaparte had more cause to complain on this head, and received less satisfaction, than our ministry were inclined to allow. On the other hand, it is impossible not to perceive the effects of the towering ambition, and irritable, uncontrollable temper of Buonaparte. The report of Sebastiani; the affair of

Hamburg; the declaration to the French assembly, that England cannot stand alone against France; the vehemence and want of restraint in his conversation, — all these circumstances give too clear an indication that such dispositions, in possession of such power, are incompatible with the peace of the world.

What strikes me as most remarkable in the whole business, is the entire want of reserve on the part of Buonaparte; especially in his conference with Lord Whitworth, in which he committed himself in the most extraordinary manner. I have no doubt that that conference, in which he acknowledged his present weakness and his future ambitious projects, decided our ministry to bring him to terms now.

I very much hope that you (that is, our friends,) will not commit yourselves hastily; and above all, that you will not attempt the defence of this Corsican, who is, in truth, indefensible. He is a most fierce being:—

> "Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> Jura negat sibi nata, nihil non arrogat armis."

It is easy to see, after all, that had the negotiation been in Fox's hands, he would have preserved the peace of the world with ease and

honour; for certainly Buonaparte was not disposed to war.

* * * * * *

Write again soon, and believe me ever

Yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 101.

Liverpool, May 24. 1803.

MY DEAR CREEVEY,

I have just received your packet by the coach, dated Sunday, with the important intelligence that the Emperor has made a direct offer of mediation. This circumstance changes the aspect of things, and puts the ministry into a most embarrassing situation. If we go on, Russia is against us, and the northern confederacy is revived. Buonaparte has only to shut the Weser and the Elbe against us, and I do not see where we can find an entrance for our manufactures into the continent of Europe. If we stop, and war follows after all, the Consul will be prepared, and our golden and easy conquests will be snatched from us. Supposing the affair to be compromised, what has happened will lower the top-gallant sails of the Consul,

and impress foreign nations with a great idea of the strength and daringness of England. In this point of view, if it might stop here, it would be useful.

I was touched, as well as you, with the conversation between Buonaparte and Lord Whitworth. It was, on his part, open and magnanimous, and I believe he disclosed his whole mind without reserve. Had he had a great mind, and a real friend to peace to deal with, — Fox for instance, or Grey, — there might have been wisdom as well as magnanimity in his confessions. But it is very evident that, as the case stood, this conversation entirely counteracted his object. It produced the determination of our people to stick to him, and risk a war. In this conversation they affect to find notable discoveries. What! you won't fight for Egypt; France *must* have it one day or other. What! your fleet is not ready for us now, and will not be for ten years to come. So you are preparing to fight us ten years hence! Then, have at you now! This is the sort of impression made by this conversation on such minds as those of our ministers; as if, in the necessary course of human reflection, such thoughts must not have been in every man's mind, as well as in Buonaparte's, without supposing any particular deter-

mination to war, or any other view of its probability than what arises from the unchanging nature of man, and the unvarying evidence of experience.

* * * * * *

Some time ago you ascribed to me some letters in the *Morning Chronicle*. I forgot to tell you they are not mine, and that I have not written an article in the London papers since the riots of the "No Popery" mob in 1780.

Adieu, my dear Creevey.

Ever yours,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 102.

Liverpool, September 27. 1803.

MY DEAR CREEVEY,

* * * * *

You have so strengthened and confirmed my own ideas in regard to invasion, that I am quite easy on that head. England is out of the question. What the enemy can do is by blowing up disaffection. A small party (which is all they can hope to land in our island) may kindle a flame in Ireland, as they formerly did in the north of Scotland; and the means employed to defend

Scotland would defend Ireland as effectually. O what a set of eternal fools the ministers are to neglect those means! Will the death and dying words of Emmett produce no effect? How easily the generous enthusiasts might be detached from France and its cause! But we disgust and outrage four millions of people, and throw them into the scale of the most dangerous enemy, ten times over, that ever England encountered. * * * *

Yours ever,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 103.

Liverpool, November 22. 1803.

MY DEAR CREEVEY,

In regard to the refusing to exchange our people stopped in France for French prisoners taken in war, I know not what to say. I fear it is not fit to avow what I think. For Buonaparte's conduct in that instance there may be no precedent; but I cannot say there was no provocation, or that there is no justification *in foro conscientiæ*. We refuse to execute our treaty, and denounce war if certain conditions in it are not abandoned. Our demands are resisted, and

we commence war. The nature of our force enables us to make an easy prey of the unprotected property and people of France on the sea, and we seize them accordingly; — seize them unconscious of danger, and deluded with the confidence that it is a time of profound peace. France cannot take our people and property on the sea, for she has no naval force. But she finds that while her people and shipping are carried in shoals into our harbours, a number of English people, seeing this, and long forewarned of the danger, are still gaping about the streets of Paris, and remaining there after our ambassador has departed, which, we contend, was a virtual declaration of war. Shall Buonaparte spare these men because they are on *land*, while we ravage the *sea* without control? Shall he neglect the only means in his power of securing exchange or good treatment to his unoffending countrymen, seized by us in the hour of supposed peace and security, and shut up in our detestable prisons? If he had done all this on a mere physical distinction, — perhaps a distinction introduced into the law of nations (for of this I am ignorant), — that persons and property on land are not to be made answerable for persons and property seized at sea, he would have deserted all the principles which have

hitherto regulated his conduct; — principles which in a thousand instances are unjustifiable, but which in this case may, I fear, be defended. Thinking in this manner, I deprecate the refusal to exchange our countrymen seized in France, and fear that these measures of irritation are likely to lead to mutual hatred and revenge, of which helpless prisoners will on both sides be the victims. But if you should even approve of these reasonings, I do not advise you to use them; for the country is no longer in a state of mind in which they can be received.

A case somewhat similar to this occurred between us and America in 1794 and 5. Under certain arbitrary constructions of the power of blockade, we had begun to seize all American vessels bound to France or the French Islands, or both. (I do not recollect the precise case, or the precise principle we set up.) We had seized in this way an immense quantity of shipping. America had no navy and could not retaliate, while she loudly denied the pretended principle on which we justified our conduct. She could not retaliate on the sea, but on the land she could. Ten millions of British property were in America. She threatened to make this answer for our spoliations at sea, and we desisted. Afterwards came the convention to

settle the mutual claims of the two countries, under which I have heard that we have paid back to America seven hundred thousand pounds.

A people all powerful on the sea are naturally disposed to interpret maritime law by maxims, which admit of as large an exercise as possible of this peculiar power. When the naval power of Europe was divided pretty equally among several nations, a tyrannical interpretation of the maritime code was of the less consequence; because each might profit and each might suffer by this interpretation in turns. But now that all this power is in the hands of a single nation, such an interpretation may be made the means of unrestrained tyranny over the rest, and cannot be acted on without exciting general apprehension, enmity, and hatred in the whole. In such a situation, it is in vain that we could refer to the precedents of darker times and of differently constituted society. If we would be respected, we must submit our maritime conduct to the eternal principles of justice. This, I take it, is the very point at issue between us and the rest of Europe at the present moment. But how to yield *with safety at present?*—There is the rub.

* * * * * * *

Adieu, my dear Creevey!

Ever yours most faithfully,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 104.

To James Scarlett, Esq., now Sir James Scarlett.

Liverpool, 26th February, 1802.

My dear Sir,

The bearer of this is a young poet of some celebrity, Mr. Campbell, the author of the "Pleasures of Hope." He was introduced to me by Mr. Stewart of Edinburgh, and has been some days in my house. I have found him, as might be expected, a young man of uncommon acquirements and learning; of unusual quickness of apprehension and great sensibility.

He is going to London, with the view of superintending an edition of his poem for his own benefit, by permission of the booksellers to whom the copy-right was sold before the work was printed, and who having profited in an extraordinary degree by the transaction, have now given the permission above mentioned, on condition that the edition shall be of a kind that shall not interfere with their editions. He is to give a quarto edition, with some embellishments, price a guinea, — the printing by Bensley. You must lay out a fee with him; and if you can do

him any little service, you will oblige me and serve a man of genius.

* * * * * *

We get uneasy here about the delay in the definitive treaty. Too much rests with this tremendous Corsican. He holds the destiny of nations in the palm of his hands. There has not been such a preponderance in Europe, or in the world, in one man's hands, since the days of Charlemagne; and I fear his policy is war. He does not even seek to keep measures. This swallowing down of the Cisalpine was an enormous gulp.

What is doing among our public men? It would afford me great pleasure to hear of there being any prospect of your taking a part, in a becoming situation, for our administration wants support, and is decidedly pacific. This giving up Napper Tandy, pending the treaty, is proof positive of their pacific views, and must be a great triumph to the Chief Consul.

I shall write a few lines to Mr. Mackintosh by Mr. Campbell.

Mrs. Currie unites in every kind wish to you and Mrs. Scarlett, and Robert.

Adieu, my dear friend,

Yours in haste,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 105.

To the Earl of Galloway, Trentham Hall.

Liverpool, 25th December, 1802.

My Lord,

I feel very sensibly the honour you have done me in your kind and unexpected favour of the 23d, and I lose no time in acknowledging it.

* * * * * *

The road of politics, during the present reign especially, seems to me to have been a difficult and thorny path; and notwithstanding the excellent character of the monarch on the throne, I do not think the external relations of the nation have been conducted fortunately. I refer particularly to the two last wars, in the conduct of both of which Lord Melville had so great a share. After the expenditure of 400 millions of money, how short are we of the *comparative* greatness and the *absolute* security which we possessed after the peace of 1763! Yet, during the intervening period, the security of property has been uninterrupted, the laws have been justly administered, and the industry of the nation has made an unexampled progress in the direction of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; which has, I have no doubt,

added *much more* to the capital of the kingdom than our wars have destroyed. Hence, my Lord, *up to this day*, the vitals of our prosperity are untouched, and the sources of our greatness uncorrupted. It is not to be disputed that much of the good that has been obtained, and of the evil that has been prevented, is owing to the exertions and example of men of your high rank and fortune devoting themselves to the improvement of the soil, and of other branches of public industry and economy. How often have I execrated the attempts made by persons calling themselves Anti-jacobins, to depreciate the labours of the late Duke of Bedford in this direction, as useless in themselves, and derogatory from his rank! Labours of this kind are as honourable as they are useful; and they are *essential* to the nation's safety, not to say to its prosperity. You have every cause to congratulate yourself on the share you have taken in these *saving* labours, and to speak with the sincerity you encourage, you have, in my mind, no cause to regret that your responsibility for the external politics of the country has not been greater, notwithstanding the indignation you may justly feel at the base spirit and the base means by which your just influence has been opposed.

The subjects which you propose for my con-

sideration have, at times, occupied a considerable share of my thoughts. The publication which you mention of my friend and kinsman, Mr. Bell, I have not yet read. An anonymous work which he published under the name of "Three Essays, &c." he sent to me, and I gave him my thoughts on it, at his desire. That work was, I believe, the nucleus of the present one. I remember he recommended the raising the supplies on income, to an extent far beyond what has ever been attempted. To that system, I confess, I think the objections are insuperable, both from the modifications requisite to render the principle just, on account of the various sources and characters of income; and also from the difficulty, I may say, impossibility, of carrying the principle, supposing it to be adjusted, into fair effect. You cannot conceive to what heart-burnings and vexations the income tax gave rise here, and to what a degree it was resisted and evaded. To render it palatable to the mercantile body, persons in trade made their returns to commercial commissioners. These commissioners, I am assured, disputed almost every return, and were suspected of examining from interested motives, into the real property and the state of affairs of all who were concerned in the same branches of trade, in which

they themselves were engaged. You can easily conceive to what animosity such a suspicion, true or false, would give rise.

The income tax was a measure, at the first view fair, but not adopted on a due consideration of the moral qualities of our nature: the want of which, has proved fatal to many a fair speculation on government as well as finance. I should lament extremely to see it revived.

The rapid increase of the poor rates is, indeed, a tremendous evil! The late years of scarcity have contributed to it greatly. At that season, wages and allowances rose rapidly, and they have not since been proportionably diminished. In the committee for managing the poor in Liverpool, of which I have lately been chosen a member at a town's meeting, I have made some observations on this subject; and have endeavoured to show that the interests of the poor themselves require that the extraordinary allowances made during a season of scarcity, should not be continued, now that plenty is restored; and on the same grounds, I have deprecated the continuance of the high price of wages. But reductions are difficult; the families to whom allowances in money at their own houses were given, when potatoes were from five to seven shillings per bushel, when called up individually

before the committee, represent themselves to be as much in distress as ever, now that potatoes have fallen to two shillings; and the out-door allowances, as they are called, which rose from 3000*l.* to 10,000*l.* a year during the scarcity, are actually now 9500*l.* It is lamentable to think that these representations of distress are, in most instances, true. Habituated to this weekly allowance, the poor have abated so much from their industry, or added so much to the alehouse bill.

The truth is, the poor rates are founded on an erroneous principle, and they have debased the character and impaired the morals of the English poor. Unfortunately their habits are established on this system, which cannot therefore be immediately destroyed, and which requires, at the same time, imperiously some effectual, though perhaps slow, remedy. The propositions which you have had the goodness to communicate to me, seem, as far as I have considered them, to deserve particular attention, and I will communicate them to some friends of mine, one of them Mr. Roscoe, who are deeply interested in this subject. The savings of the poor man are, in the detail, so small, that he is, no doubt, under perpetual temptation to spend them as they arise. But if there were a bank

at hand, in which they could be deposited at the end of every week, and receive interest, it might beget habits, first, of saving, and then of increased industry, and at once improve the characters of their bodies and minds. The success of this plan in your trials of it is important. Something similar was, I think, practised by Mr. Dale, at his manufactory near Lanark. The Scottish poor are, however, more susceptible of such a plan than those of England, from their never having been debased by the humane but impolitic system, to which those of England have been subjected.

I fear, my Lord, you will begin to be fatigued by all these observations, to which your very obliging and very important communication gave rise in my mind.

I shall be happy, at all times, in the pleasure of hearing from your Lordship; and have the honour to be, with sincere respect,

My Lord,

Your very faithful servant,

JAMES CURRIE.

No. 106.

To Dugald Stewart, Esquire, Edinburgh.

Liverpool, March 6. 1803.

My dear Sir,

Lest you should accuse me of negligence in not acknowledging your present of the Account of the Life and Writings of Dr. Reid, I must mention to you, that earnestly and even impatiently as I have expected it, the volume has never reached me. If you have forwarded it to me, will you have the goodness to acquaint me by what conveyance. I was in hopes to have been able to have procured it by this time from the booksellers; but, on sending to London for it, we are informed that it is not yet published. If you have not sent it, and have a copy by you that you can spare, will you immediately forward it to me by the coach to Manchester, directed to Dr. Percival's care, who will find it easy to convey it to me here; informing me, at the same time, by post, of the day on which it sets out. I need not say, that I interest myself particularly in this publication, and that I have no other fear about it than that I may not find it of sufficient extent. Your view of the life and writings of Dr. Robertson is excellent. This

(its shortness) is the only fault I find with it; except, perhaps, that I am disposed to think that you give rather more weight than I should be inclined to do, to the influence of his birth and residence in Scotland, in affecting the character and limiting the range of his style. Dr. Robertson wrote only on history, and it is admitted that his *historical* style is excellent; and though he might not have succeeded equally in writing on subjects that require more ease, and admit of less dignity, yet I do not think that this can necessarily be inferred from his being a native and resident of Edinburgh, since Mr. Hume seems to me to have unquestionably this ease and variety; and both he and Dr. Smith are, I know, admitted by Dr. Parr and the members of the King of Clubs into the list of English classics, or, rather, into the list of writers who possess the English idiomatic style. In all this pretension to peculiar *anglicism* in writers of the metropolis, there is, I think, much idle affectation. Some of these pretenders even exclude Lancashire and the north of England from the pale of purity, though they are utterly at a loss to point out a standard writer of the metropolis, or the universities, by the study of whose compositions barbarisms may be corrected. Johnson, Gibbon, Parr himself, deviate much farther from the

English of Dryden, Addison or Swift, than Robertson, and are not admitted as standards. Some of my London friends are rather inclined to mention Burke and Goldsmith, both Irishmen, and educated in Ireland.

The fact seems to me to be, that the English language is still in a very unfixed state, and that the Scottish writers of the last, and perhaps of the present generation, will and must have great influence on the future English style, not merely from their popularity and talents, but from the turn for metaphysics and critical analysis which has prevailed among our countrymen, and which has a necessary tendency to render style accurate, and to reduce the idioms of a particular tongue nearer the standard of general grammar. In another generation we shall have, I expect, comedies from Edinburgh, as we begin to have comedians. I do not know that there is any thing in all this inconsistent with any of your observations; but the train of thought arose in my mind, and I have given it vent.

Campbell passed a week with me lately: he is much improved in his spirits and appearance.

I am much obliged to you for your kind enquiries after my health, which is improved. I very sincerely wish to hear good accounts of yours.

I had the pleasure of a note from you by Prince Bariatinski and Mr. Coxe, with whom I was much pleased.

I am always, my dear Sir,
Your faithful servant,
J. CURRIE.

P. S. You will see that the cause of my writing is to procure your work on Dr. Reid, for which I would willingly even pay postage.

No. 107.

To the Rev. John Corrie, Birmingham.

Liverpool, Nov. 3. 1803.

DEAR SIR,

I received, a few hours ago, your "Reflections on the present State of Public Affairs;" which I have just perused with high and unmixed approbation. The press has not, for a long while, produced any thing of the kind so calm, manly, eloquent, and seasonable. I heartily wish it may attract the notice it deserves.*

* A Fast sermon, of which a second edition was called for, preached at Birmingham, Oct. 1803, on the renewal of the war after the peace of Amiens, but now long out of print.

It gives me particular pleasure to see that you have given the public your sentiments on this occasion. Many of our friends have been rather backward, and, disgusted with the original measures which may be said to have led to our present situation, do not see or feel exactly as it appears to me the season demands.

This is natural and excusable, but it must not last. *Of us* more especially (who originally disapproved of the war), this awful crisis demands every exertion, if we would not that the power of the bayonet should be established all over the earth.

The old alarmists can do, comparatively, little: they degraded their characters and wasted their means before the real danger arrived,—before our cause was the cause of the human race. Now that it is, they rave unheeded, or at least their exhortations produce little effect. Such men as you are can do much. I verily believe that your discourse, if circulated, would produce a greater effect, both from its nature and the quarter whence it comes, than any effort which the Bench of Bishops could make, Landaff perhaps excepted.

I hope you enjoy good health, aud that this will not be the last of your patriotic exertions:

I see you have considered the great questions of politics deeply.

In haste, I am, my dear Sir,
Your faithful servant,
JAMES CURRIE.

No. 108.

To Miss C——, G——e.

Liverpool, Feb. 4. 1804.

MY DEAR MISS C.

Having had occasion to write to your brother and sister on their little boy's health, I have been every moment reminded of you, and of my own unworthiness, in having so long delayed to answer your note of the 15th January, the reference in which did me so much honour.

I might tell you the truth, that I have been extremely occupied; I might say, besides, that I have been much indisposed. These excuses will not serve me. What occupation could I have that would justify me in neglecting the task assigned me by my fair friend; which, spiritless and languid as I have been, might, coming from her, have inspired the strength for its own consummation? The truth is, I read her note with pleasure and approbation; — I turned to Shakspeare with alacrity; — I was about to place the

laurel on her brow;—I read and paused;—the damps of doubt stole over me;—I shut the book, and deferred my decision for further consideration.

In the mean time I have amused myself with starting the question in our little parties. Almost every body is with Miss C., Mrs. L. will not even admit that there is a question in the case. My own Jane has scarcely a doubt; and yet such is the perversity of my understanding, that neither authority nor discussion convinces me, and that I find myself deserting to the ranks of the adversaries.

How are we to understand the words of Desdemona—"she wished that Heaven had made her such a man"?—that is the question. Does she wish herself changed into a man? or does she (as at first sight seems most natural) wish *for* herself such a husband?

"Does it not seem unnatural that such a weak timid character, as Desdemona is represented to be, should wish herself in the place of a warrior who had gone through innumerable perils, as was the case with Othello? and does not such a wish seem particularly inconsistent with the situation of a woman desperately in love, as was confessedly her case?"—These interrogations, which you put with such force, contain the

whole strength of the argument for your opinion. I will tell you why I more than hesitate to answer them as you expect. First, then, it must be allowed, that whatever Desdemona's character may have been in other respects, her admiration of heroic deeds was unbounded. Othello was not young — was not beautiful, — yet he won her.

> "That I did love the Moor to live with him,
> My downright violence and storm of fortune
> May trumpet to the world; my heart's subdued,
> Even to the very quality of my Lord:
> I saw Othello's visage in his mind;
> And to his *honours* and his *valiant parts*
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate."

This is her own account of the matter, perfectly agreeing with the previous representation of the Moor. He told her the story of his life — his "battles," "sieges," and "disastrous chances,"

> "And moving accidents by flood and field."

He often "beguiled her of her tears," and got for his pains "a world of sighs."

> "She swore in faith 'twas wondrous pitiful;
> She wished she had not heard it; yet she wished
> That heaven had made her such a man; she thanked me,
> And bade me if I had a friend that loved her,
> I should but teach him how to tell my story,
> And that would woo her. Upon *this hint* I spake."

The affecting tale of Othello, the "distressful strokes his youth had suffered," excited the

warm sympathies, and melted the generous heart of Desdemona: her tenderness and admiration break forth amidst her sighs, in sudden and abrupt exclamations; and she passes rapidly, as is most natural in such situations, from one train of thought to another: — "'twas strange," — "'twas pitiful:" —

> "She wished she had not heard it; yet she wished
> That heaven had made her such a man."

Such a passing thought as this last, taken literally, may be allowed to be natural in the breast of a woman, the counterpart of a hero, who, though *tender* and *delicate*, was not timid, and who was passionately devoted to heroic achievements. Had she, indeed, rested here, we might have found fault; but see how beautifully the woman breaks out, and terminates the whole: —

> "She thanked me;
> And bade me if I had a friend that loved her,
> I should but teach him how to tell my story,
> And that would woo her."

The tender and delicate Desdemona, in whose heart love was the offspring of pity and admiration, betrays her secret at last; but not so soon, not so broadly, as the elliptical construction of the words in question supposes: for a mo-

roine drawn by the same masterly hand, would have exclaimed, "Alas the day! what shall I do with my doublet and hose?"

Yours faithfully,

My dear Miss C.,

JAMES CURRIE.

timid or not, she was a passionate admirer of daring and heroic deeds, and might, for a moment, wish to be the being that performed them. But I deny that she was "weak and timid." She was generous, affectionate, delicate, virtuous, and heroic, with that characteristic self-devotion to the object of her admiration which forms the finest feature of the finest of your sex; the truth and value of which, heroes only are capable of feeling, and poets of the highest order of pourtraying. Of this order was Homer, whose Andromache and Penelope will rise to your view. Of this order was Shakspeare, who has divested his heroines of some portion of their elevation, to make them more engaging patterns of loveliness; but who has infused into them all a large portion of that generosity and self-devotion which form the pride and triumph of your sex; invaluable qualities, when it pleases Heaven that they are wisely and worthily directed!

"But is not the literal meaning of the words inconsistent with the situation of a woman desperately in love?" As a settled wish I allow it, but not as a passing thought. Had the wish been granted, the feelings remaining as before, Desdemona would have soon found her error, and, on the approach of her lover, like another he-

PREFACE

TO THE INTENDED FOURTH EDITION.*

In publishing another, and probably a last edition of the following Letter, the author thinks it necessary to explain to the few, who have interested themselves in the subject, the circumstances that led him into a path remote from his usual studies, and the motives that gave rise to the original publication. This explanation he expected to have had an opportunity of giving in a new edition of the pamphlet several months ago; but it has been deferred by some editions which have been published by persons unknown to the author, or the London editor.

The Letter of Jasper Wilson was originally a private letter, or rather two private letters, written without the least view to publication, to two gentlemen, friends and correspondents of the author. For obvious reasons they are not named at present, and they will, no doubt, be

* See Vol. I. p. 206.

influenced by the same motives of delicacy which operate on the author.

Called by them to a consideration of the subject, the Author soon found his attention deeply engaged, and his feelings warmly interested; and learning, that though France pressed to negotiate, a continuance of the war was resolved on, he determined in the latter end of May, 1793, to try the chance (whatever it might be) of influencing the Minister and the nation by those representations which he had addressed to his private friends, and which being to his own mind convincing, it was natural for him to believe of importance, and not unfitted to produce a similar effect on the minds of others. This determination was sudden, — it was made at a time when, if any effect was to be expected, there was not a moment to be lost; — the session of Parliament was closing, and a new and fatal series of action and conduct seemed on the eve of commencement. The critical reader will see, that at the time of writing the Letter, accounts had been received of the battle of St. Amand *; but the fall of the Brissotines was not known †, and the views of Administration

* See page 485. also page 491.

† This is the fact, though an expression in page 475. might lead to a contrary supposition.

were not developed. Our treaties with the combined powers, though, as it has since appeared, at that time formed, had not been laid before Parliament or the public; *Valenciennes had not been summoned by the Duke of York to surrender to the Emperor of Germany, nor Dunkirk to the King of England.*

At this critical period the shock of commercial credit spread every where distress and alarm; and some of those who supported Ministry in the commencement of hostilities, observing that Holland was saved, and Flanders recovered, that France was humbled by defeat and distracted by divisions, doubted, under all the circumstances of the case, of the propriety of carrying the war into her territories, and thought that the application of Le Brun on the subject of peace ought not to be rejected. It was even said (but this is given only as the rumour of the day) that these considerations had much weight on a part of administration, and that the remnant of the old American cabinet and their adherents alone hoped for the conquest, and meditated the division, of France. The Author of the following Letter believed that, in such a situation, even a slight indication of dislike to the continuance of the war, on the part of the people, might turn the scale, and that his humble effort might be

felt in the balance. Under these impressions of mind, he sat down to model his private correspondence into a letter to Mr. Pitt; and, printing as he wrote, in a very few days the Letter of Jasper Wilson issued from the press.

To the undertaking of this last task no man prompted him; in the execution of it no one assisted him. The information contained in the work had of course been derived from various quarters, particularly that which respected trade and manufactures; but the merits or demerits of the publication must rest on a single individual. As he revolved the state of Europe, the importance of the moment grew on his mind. As yet our character on the Continent for power was undiminished, our character for wisdom was little impaired. On the speedy cessation of hostilities, the peace and order of society, the progress of human improvement, and the happiness of the present generation of men, seemed to depend: — on the continuance of the war, scenes of bloodshed and devastation unexampled; final defeat to the allies; the sudden wreck of established opinions, and with them the wreck of morals; and disorder and dismay throughout Europe for a long succession of years. Writing under these impressions, and writing in haste, it will not appear surprising if

he seized and urged to the utmost every consideration that might influence the nation and the ministry to peace.

Whatever may be thought of the Author's prudence or judgment, no unprejudiced person will cast blame on his intentions; and those who are capable of reading his publication with candour, will doubtless find the marks of a mind utterly divested of party zeal, deeply impressed with its subject, and clothing in unstudied language sentiments ardent but sincere.

The haste of the composition was an inducement with the Author to withhold his name. The sentiments originating in private correspondence retained too much, perhaps, of unceremonious and unguarded expression; and as the influence of the publication must chiefly depend on the force and truth of the general reasoning, no advantage could be obtained by the authority of a name in a great measure unknown. Other considerations arising from his situation in life, and the heated state of the public mind, had their influence on this occasion; and the Letter was therefore printed under a name which, though obviously fictitious, might serve to distinguish it from similar productions to which that period gave birth.

If these pages should survive the storm of

passion and prejudice which obscures our hemisphere, it will doubtless appear extraordinary, that the Author of the following Letter should think it necessary either to explain or to justify the motives of his conduct. The Letter of Jasper Wilson, every man will now see, is addressed not to the illiterate, but to the informed; — not to the passions, but to the understanding: it inculcates every where respect for our laws, and for our constitution of government; it flatters no party in the state, nor enters on any subject of party; it keeps to a single question, — a question on which, at that time, England might decide for herself, and perhaps for Europe, — *the question of peace or war.* To think differently on points of national interest is inseparable from human nature; to express this difference is the criterion, the safeguard, the very essence of a free constitution. While the press is free, the truth will gradually unfold itself in the comparison of different opinions; the true interests of society will be perceived and acted on, under various forms of constitution; and men, gradually enlightened, will at length be swayed by the influence of reason, and not by the government of force. Shall it then be said, that though these maxims be in general true, the question discussed by Jasper Wilson must be excepted

from their application? Is the subject of war too mysterious, too transcendent for men in the private walks of life to discuss? and does experience warrant the conclusion that Ministers and men in public life are alone qualified to reason and decide on it? Whether we consult our understandings or our experience, the contrary of this will appear. The man who best understood the interests of the nation in the two last wars was neither a Minister nor a Member of Parliament. He who best supported the cause of peace was then a servant of the God of peace; — he was — he is still — the Dean of Gloucester.* If we consult the records of Par-

* It is curious to observe that Dean Tucker was treated by the party writers in favour of the war of 1756 as a concealed Jacobite, and one bribed by France. This is a common form of party malice.

In like manner the author of the following Letter has been called a Jacobin, and perpetual insinuations have been thrown out in the various answers published on the side of Administration, that the attachment he has so strongly expressed to the constitution is hollow and insincere. In this way the authors of The British Critic have distinguished themselves. In their critique on the following Letter they insinuate, as from their own knowledge, that the Author (whom in a subsequent number they undertake to mention by name) is a hypocrite, and that he is one much distinguished among those who are enemies to the constitution in church and state. Whom these impartial critics (Messrs. Beloe and Nares) may understand by this

liament, we shall indeed find that the real interests of the nation respecting peace and war are seldom to be discovered in the speeches of Ministers. Ministers have had the praise of employing the knowledge that arises in society to the use of the nation; and this is, indeed, a high praise: but the improvements which have entered into the political system cannot be supposed to have originated with them; they may be traced to the labours of men meditating the course of human affairs in philosophic retirement, and bending the whole force of their understandings on the condition, the wants, and

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description it is difficult to ascertain exactly. The gentleman they have so wantonly slandered is not of that number in any sense that even bigotry can use; he never belonged to a political club or association of any kind, nor embraced the peculiar opinions or prejudices of any party, unless a general love of liberty, once supposed to be the pride of a British subject, should by these reverend calumniators be thought to deserve this character.†

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† A passage is here omitted, alluding to the conduct of Mr. George Chalmers, and relating the circumstances which attended the origin of Dr. Currie's very slight acquaintance with that gentleman. The statement dictated by Dr. Currie on his death-bed, which is given in the Appendix to Vol. I., is more full and satisfactory, and in other respects corresponds with the one left out. — *Editor.*

the capacities of man. * Many of our national misfortunes have arisen from our not estimating the situation of statesmen justly; from the fixed aversion that some feel, and from the invariable idolatry which others entertain, for the Minister of the day. Indiscriminate assent, or indiscriminate opposition to Ministers, is equally wrong, and, perhaps, equally injurious. Taking human nature as it stands, by uniform adulation and submission the best Minister will, in time, be ruined; while, on the other hand, by an uniform opposition the means of correcting his real errors are impaired, and the brightest talents lose their effect.

Ministers, especially Ministers long in office, in forming their judgment on national measures, labour under prejudices and difficulties which must at times operate unfavourably. A few observations on this subject may be of use, not only in correcting our own prejudices, but in

* The two measures of Mr. Pitt's Administration that are most likely to receive the praises of posterity are the Million Bill, and the Commercial Treaty with France. In the first of these measures, it is now well known, he was the pupil of Dr. Price; in the second, of Smith and Tucker. The figure he made under the direction of these private but illustrious men may be compared with his present appearance, when he has that veteran and *professional* statesman Lord Hawkesbury for his counsellor.

teaching us to make the proper allowances for men, however elevated, who must necessarily labour under like passions and feelings as ourselves. A Minister — a virtuous Minister, we will suppose, — commences his career by a course of action that has for its object the national good, and purposes to found his fame on measures of real patriotism. In this course he is thwarted by his selfish or ignorant adherents; he is, perhaps, opposed by his open or secret adversaries. The errors he has committed (and who can avoid error?) are pointed out with bitterness; his good intentions are not admitted. He will not acknowledge mistakes so vehemently commented on; he defends them in the face of parliament and the nation; he retorts on his opponents; his passions grow warm; and from this moment, on the points in discussion, his judgment is too generally perverted or obscured. These observations are, indeed, applicable, not to Ministers alone, but in some degree to their opponents also; and every man that stands aloof from party must often have lamented over the conflict of talents the most splendid, on occasions the most important, where the interests of the nation have been lost sight of amidst the recriminations of personal opposition, and the vehemence of party zeal.

But though public men of every description may be supposed too generally to look at public measures through a party medium, there are circumstances which, in this respect, are peculiar to the situation of a Minister, that deserve to be noticed. In the habit of guiding parliament by his influence and his eloquence, and of representing the kingdom at large in his foreign transactions, he is led, perhaps insensibly, into the habit of confounding the nation's interests with his own, and of conducting the affairs of ten millions of men on the ground of personal feeling, and, perhaps, of personal pride. And hence it will invariably be found that the conduct of a people towards foreign powers will partake as much of the temper as of the talents of its Ministers, and will be direct, generous, and friendly, or sullen, haughty, and reserved, according to the dispositions of those to whom its interests are intrusted.

If these observations point out the general propriety of some controul on the conduct of men in office, there are considerations peculiar to the subject of war, that indicate more particularly how extremely dangerous it is for a nation to suffer itself to be plunged into it at the pleasure of the Minister of the day. On the question of war a Minister has often an interest different

from, and even opposite to, that of the nation. The page of history shows us that, among unprincipled statesmen, a foreign war is an approved method of diverting the attention of a people from their domestic grievances. By war the executive power is, for a time, strengthened, the influence of the Minister extended, and his direct patronage enlarged. By war his emoluments are probably increased, his ambition flattered, and his thirst of power (the constant disease of high situation), if not satisfied, allayed. Amidst the ruin that war produces, he does not enjoy his luxuries the less; his sensibilities are gradually destroyed by the very evils he occasions; and, after issuing the mandate that carries nations to battle, and that strews the earth with the wounded and the dead, he does not, in all probability, find the down of his pillow ruffled, or his slumbers disturbed.

If it be said that the information peculiar to cabinets compensates these disadvantages, and should of itself lead a free nation to trust the subject of war to their decision, — the answer to this is plain. Wars have hitherto been, in general, quarrels between cabinets; and the nations they represent have had little to do in them but to suffer and to die. To this state of things the diplomatic science is applicable: the

the disciples of Machiavel are properly opposed by men educated in the same school. In this situation of affairs, a knowledge of the personal character and private views of his antagonists is of importance to a negotiator; and from this knowledge the great body of the people are commonly excluded. In transactions with arbitrary governments, where every thing depends on the rulers, and little on the nation, it were folly to despise the diplomatic science. But, unhappily, England has of late been engaged in wars of a very different nature, — in wars not against courts, but against nations. In this war, and that which preceded it, we have undertaken, not to humble the pride or control the ambition of a monarch or a minister, but to prostrate an armed nation before us; and here every thing depends on the nation, and little on the rulers. To this state of things the usual science of statesmen will be found inapplicable, and the calculations of political accountants entirely out of place. The Minister that would reason justly on such occasions must inform himself, not of the ordinary, but of the possible, exertions of human nature; he must look for precedents, not in the files of office, but in the pages of history; he must turn away from the follies of courtiers and

the praises of parasites, and employ his whole attention on the nature and character of man.

The consideration that a knowledge of this kind is not incompatible with a private station was not without its effect in emboldening the Author to offer the following Letter to the public. Ministers, it is true, and still more the low adherents of Ministers, frequently affect to decry the interference of private men in public affairs; and at no time are they so vehement in deprecating this interference, as when they are sensible that public measures cannot bear examination. That every man should confine himself to his own business, and leave the affairs of the nation to those intrusted with them, is, at such times, their favourite maxim, — as if a freeman, under a free constitution, were not concerned in the affairs of the nation, — as if he had no interest, and, of course, no right to express an opinion on measures that may ruin his property and destroy his peace; that may deprive him of his children, the pride and support of his age; that may rob him of those rights which his ancestors purchased with their blood, and place him an abject slave at the feet of his oppressors! The Minister who, by himself or his adherents, shall succeed in persuading the great body of the people that the measures of his administration are not

within the reach of their comprehension, nor open to their animadversion, will triumph over the constitution of his country, and render the liberties of Englishmen an empty name.

Is there, then, no confidence to be placed in a Minister? Doubtless there is; but the confidence pointed out by the constitution is such a one as the national interests occasionally demand, and no other; — such a confidence as it is proper to repose in a human being, who may himself be deceived, and who may have an interest in deceiving the public; such a confidence as it is proper to repose in one whose situation, as experience assures us, is so beset with difficulties and prejudices, that he can never be expected, of his own accord, to tread back a path of error once entered on; and who, if he be not stopped in his career by the prerogative of the crown or the sense of the nation, may be expected, even at a crisis like the present, to move forward in defiance of dear-bought experience, till the resources of his country fail, or the deepening stream of human blood opposes an insurmountable obstacle to his progress.

In the mysterious course of human affairs, it is an affecting circumstance to observe, that, under every known form of government, when the great mass of the people are agitated to a

certain degree, they generally reject the counsels of their real friends, and give their support to measures injurious to their own interests. How shall we account for this melancholy truth? With sorrow I fear it must be confessed, that the bulk of mankind in almost every corner of the earth, are as yet rational beings in a very limited sense of the word; that on every point which deeply impresses their minds there are few that can reason, though every man can feel; that where the passions of the many are once awakened, they are inflamed by a contagious sympathy, which dissolves the connection between the understanding and the assent, and makes the belief a slave of the imagination.

Considerations of this kind may present to those who support any great or sudden extension of the elective franchise, serious grounds for reflection and hesitation. It may, perhaps, be said, that men by an admission to civil rights will at last learn to use them with discretion; but it seems extremely evident that previous instruction is necessary to any considerable change of this kind. Though England has increased in opulence, ignorance has made a rapid and an alarming progress among the poor. Under the system of manufactures, as it has been hitherto conducted, the minds as well as the bodies of

men have dwindled from their native proportions: to increase the political influence of such men in their present condition would, in all probability, neither contribute to their own happiness nor to the peace of society. Freedom, practical freedom, has its foundations laid upon knowledge; and where the foundations are firmly fixed, freedom will arise self-erected. Forms of government, like every thing human, must be appreciated by the maxims of general utility; and though these require a government of laws, not of men, they require also that laws should be formed, not by numbers, but by wisdom and knowledge. A national system of useful instruction for the poor seems to be the great panacea for our remediable political evils. Ignorance is every where a slave, even where the forms of government are most democratic; and knowledge is every where a freeman, or preparing to be free.

At no period since the death of Charles the First has England assumed an aspect so truly republican as in the last two years. Every where the people have met to declare their opinions on public measures, and almost every where the war has been supported and approved! At no period of our history have we had a Minister that has built his measures more on popular opinion

than the present, and surely the foreign politics of no Minister were ever so unfortunate. It is not with the great body of the people, as in former times, that the Ministers are at variance: with the general mass of ignorance they have formed an alliance. It is the temper and understanding of the instructed few with which they are at war: prejudice and passion are at present their friends, but reason is their enemy. Let us not deceive ourselves: the influence of the people is great, it never perhaps was greater, but unfortunately the people are deluded and misled. Would the opinions of the people be necessarily enlightened by an extension of the elective franchise? This appears extremely doubtful; at all events the remedy is not suited to the pressing nature of the disease. If reform of any kind is to be agitated at present, the means in the hands of Ministers for betraying and deceiving the public ought to be directly struck at; the venality of men in public situations, and, above all, the corruption of the press. But at the present moment, when a danger so great and so imminent presses upon us, and when the very name of reform has become hateful from the enormities by which it has been disgraced in France, it were, perhaps, better to adjourn every

question of the kind to a happier and more tranquil season.

The author of the following Letter forbears to point out the very remarkable manner in which its predictions have been verified, or to retort on those opponents, who have found it necessary to resort to the meanest and most malignant arts of calumny. That his anticipations have in every point been confirmed by events is what he will not assert. Doubtless some of his representations may appear to have been exaggerated. It is not required of a human being to be free from error; it can only be demanded of him to be candid and sincere. Of all those into whose hands the Letter of Jasper Wilson has fallen, there are few, perhaps, who have thought more humbly of it than its author. The object of his writing did not, it is evident, admit of his presenting those flattering representations of our power and resources, which are always so pleasing to the public; and, perhaps, in his zeal to avert the danger of prolonged hostilities he may have fallen into the opposite extreme. The Letter is again presented to the public as it appeared in the third edition: of its demerits or merits let the candid judge; its contents are no longer subjects for controversy.

Neither the Letter itself nor this Preface can

be pleasing to those well meaning men who think the safety of the constitution depends on the support of Mr. Pitt, and the continuance of the war; but let them reflect on this subject again, let them give it the consideration due to its mighty importance. The domestic danger which was the real motive with many of them for entering on the war has doubtless been exaggerated, and the proud hopes of conquest and submission, held out to them by the Minister and his friends, have been completely frustrated. Let them not believe that the language of moderation is the veil of deceit; that to oppose the Minister is to be disloyal to the King: the enlightened friend of his king and country will be the friend of peace; if there be a traitor among us who understands his own interests, like the traitor of Utica, *his voice will be still for war.*

If hostilities continue long,—let not our great men deceive themselves,—the capital of the country must be employed in carrying them on, and it is by the rich, not by the poor, that this must be furnished. If hostilities continue long, the wants of luxury must be curtailed, idleness as well as opulence must be diminished; the great proprietors and capitalists must descend towards the common elevation, and we must combat France by sinking nearer her level.

The resources of France, it is said, are nearly exhausted; and her present extraordinary exertions are supposed to be the convulsions of death. Here we are probably deceived. The resources of France, as Mr. Mallet du Pan has justly observed, arise in part from the Revolution itself, and the very crimes it has occasioned; and though some of them may be of a temporary nature, yet others are likely to be permanent. In the progress of the Revolution almost all the landed property of France has been confiscated; and what is resold has been resold in small parcels. The number of the proprietors of land is now great; and this division of the soil, when not carried too far, it is well known, must increase the aggregate produce of the whole. In the progress of the Revolution, the race of nobles, as well as the priesthood, by processes of guilt, on which it is dreadful indeed to reflect, have been destroyed or banished; the whole of the idle retainers of opulence have lost their means of livelihood; the manufacturers of all articles of show and luxury are probably destroyed: few men are now idle in France; and almost the only occupations that are going on, are the manufactures of food, clothing, and arms. The National Convention may be considered as the great reservoir into which all the products of

those manufactures are poured, except so much as may be necessary for the immediate wants of the labourers; and the whole surplus is employed in the maintenance of the armies in the field. Had France the same number of idle mouths as formerly, it is evident that the surplus produce applicable to the support of her military establishment must be proportionally diminished: but she approximates to the condition of the ancient republics, as Mr. Young has justly observed*; who, having little luxury and few idle men but soldiers, could therefore maintain a proportion of their population in the field, which has astonished the professional politicians of modern times.†

The soldiers in the armies of France (however they may be deluded) seem to fight as if they fought for their personal interests: the

* Idea of the present State of France.

† To unfold these ideas would be easy, and perhaps useful; those, however, who wish to see the subject fully explained may examine Hume's Essay on Commerce. Sir James Stewart's Account of the Spartan Republic, and Mr. Arthur Young's Idea of the present State of France; a publication in which the ingenious author himself must, one would suppose, see that the premises and the conclusions are strangely at variance. For forming a judgment of the probable effects of the paper money of France, it may be useful to examine the history of the paper money of America, in Ramsay's History of the American Revolution.

nation is accustomed to war and to disquiet; its genius expands in various directions; every faculty seems on the stretch: we have to contend with the vigour of the savage combined with the knowledge of civilised man. Yet, after all these considerations, it is not the power of the enemy, but the bitterness of party at home, of which a lover of his country is chiefly afraid; — a spirit by which the errors of our rulers are perpetuated, and the character of the nation is debased.

What, it may be said, does the season require? The line of conduct to be pursued is not perhaps difficult to be traced: let us declare our willingness to negotiate for peace. If our enemies refuse it, the war will be justified by necessity to every man in the nation, and the mode of carrying it on is in our own power: in this case, let us withdraw from our continental enterprises, and from our faithless and bankrupt allies; let us fight our enemy on our own element, and, if need be, on our own shores. The nation that acts on the defensive trebles her force; the nation that concentrates her force within herself, and possesses union and courage, is invincible to foreign attack. Let the friends of the people adjourn their projects of reform; let the ministerialists acknowledge their errors, and discoun-

tenance the infamous system of calumny which the worst men among them have pursued: — Hannibal is at the gates; let Rome be united.

If measures of this kind be adopted, our cause will again be the cause of justice, liberty, and our country. Talents and knowledge, so generally beaten down, will resume their proper station; and England, rousing from her slumbers, will again display her lion-port, and may bid defiance to a world in arms!

But can this be done under the auspices of Mr. Pitt? Here is the real difficulty — the serious ground of alarm. Alas! why should Englishmen, who venerate their constitution, who love their country, idolise a great but a mistaken man? Mr. Pitt has been too long in power for his own honour or the nation's interest. He has done his country service in the beginning of his career: if he would serve her again, must he not descend from his present elevation? The interests of England and of Europe demand of every man, and especially of Mr. Pitt, the sacrifice of selfish passions and feelings: every day assumes a more serious aspect than that which is past; and the present crisis will perhaps be found the most important that has presented itself for the records of history.

Here the Author of the following Letter drops his pen; and, as far as respects political subjects, it is probable that he drops it for ever. The duties which belong to his private life impose obligations on him of the most serious kind, and are fully sufficient to engage both his time and his talents. It is his wish, therefore, to withdraw from the field of politics, on which nothing could have induced him to stay, even for a moment, but the ardent desire, and the anxious hope, of serving his country at a season particularly critical. How vain his hopes were, it is needless to declare; yet, amidst scenes of unexampled and fruitless bloodshed, which he foresaw and predicted, but could not avert, he has the melancholy satisfaction of having fulfilled what appeared to him a sacred and imperative duty, and under the failure of his efforts can with confidence in the purity of his motives repose on the consolations of an approving conscience.

1795.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The following Letter was originally written, as well as printed, in so hasty a manner, that some inaccuracies of composition escaped notice, as well as several errors of the press: — it was perceived, too, on a farther review, that some illustrations and additions to particular passages were wanted, and a short but general summary of the whole. Such corrections and enlargements have accordingly been made: a Postscript has been added, exemplifying, in some of the more material points, the application of events subsequent to the original publication of the Letter to the representations and reasonings it contains; and the whole, it is hoped, will now be found less unworthy of the favourable reception which the first edition has met with.

CONTENTS.

THE Author proposes to enquire into the Commercial Distresses, and their Causes. — Extent of this Distress; general over Europe, — Origin of this Distress traced to the Funding System supporting the War System. — Nature of the Funding System; Connection with the War System. — Applied to the different Nations of Europe; and finally to France. — The breaking up of the Funding System occasioned the French Revolution. How England escaped. — Origin of the present War. — Effects of it on Paper Circulation and general Credit. — Nature of the War. — Mr. Dundas's Opinion; Folly of that Opinion. — Particular Manner in which the general Warfare affects Britain as a Manufacturing Country; contrasted with the supposition of Peace. — Contrasted with the supposition of France and England fighting alone. — Mr. Hume's Idea of the Danger of Wars to Nations in debt. — Increased Danger since his Time. Perish Commerce! Effects on our Constitution of the exclamation being realised. — Enquiry into the Necessity of the War. — Danger of War to the Limited Monarchy of France. — Unwise Conduct of England. — Misses the Opportunity of making Peace previous to the Commencement of Hostilities; again after the first Campaign between France and Germany; again in the Commencement of 1793. — Alarm of Internal Conspiracies, never enquired into, plunged us into the War — Causes of this Alarm. — Mode of Operation. Influence and Character of Mr. Burke. — Is the War likely to be short and successful? No. — Reasons given, as inducement to Peace, the real objects of the War having been attained. Effects of Revolution on the Character of Individuals. — Rise and Progress of Enthusiasm. — The Causes of resistance on the part of France traced to the Attempt to partition it. — Traced to the nature of Republicanism. — Traced to the evolution and pre-eminence of Talents. — Opinions cannot be overturned by force. — Effects of persevering in the Contest on England; Probability of its being unsuccessful, and the effects of this on National Opinions. — Congress at Antwerp. — Its fatal decision; Causes of this. — Effects of the War on Germany. — General Crisis approaching. — Conduct of the Swiss praised. — Responsibility of Mr. Pitt. — Political Character of Mr. Pitt. — Recapitulation and Exhortation to Peace. — Conclusion. — Postscript.

LETTER

TO

MR. PITT.

SIR,

AN enquiry into the causes of the general calamities which affect the commercial and manufacturing interests, and the connection which these may have with the measures of government, seems properly addressed to you as the Minister of the Crown, and the leader of the House of Commons.

A concurrence of fortune and talents has raised you to a degree of consequence in the public eye which no other individual of the age has attained; and your friends having ascribed to you much of our late unexampled prosperity *, your enemies will doubtless impute to you

* There have been three epochs in the conduct of the present ministry:—

1. From its accession to the Dutch war.
2. From the Dutch war to the regency.
3. From the regency to the present time.

1. During the first, it preserved negatively the pacific and economic system which was announced to the public in 1782. The commercial system proposed at that time (especially as far as affected America) was sacrificed to persons; that with France (thanks to M. de Vergennes, who forced it from political views,) was established on tolerably liberal principles; that with Ireland left in a most disgraceful situation to this time.

our present unparalleled distress. Party zeal may blind the one and the other; but the subject of the present enquiry must, in every point of view, press with peculiar force on your mind.

The writer of this was one of the warmest of your admirers. The progress of time and of events has cooled his enthusiasm respecting you; but has not, as is often the case, turned it into hostility. Neither disposed to offend nor flatter, he would deliver his sentiments with the deference due to your extraordinary talents, but with the earnestness and solemnity suited to the present crisis of human affairs.

That the calamities which affect our commerce and manufactures are great beyond example, it is unnecessary to prove. The unprecedented and alarming measures which are resorted to in parliament, to prevent the universal wreck of credit, put this beyond a doubt. It does not, however, seem to be generally observed that these calamities are not peculiar to Britain. Bankruptcies have spread and are spreading every where over the continent of Europe, through France, Holland, Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy, and Spain; and every where private, as well as public, credit, is impaired or destroyed. If the injury to commerce and manufactures be more felt in Britain than elsewhere, it is because we

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2. At the Dutch war, the pacific system was given up, and the old continental system revived with more than its pristine absurdity, and to an extent beyond all precedent, after having been uniformly cried down from the accession of the king.

3. From the regency to the present time, the economic system dropped, and the door opened to a greater scene of corruption than was ever known in this century of corruption. — *Marquis of Lansdown.*

have had more commerce and manufactures to be injured. And this reason, which explains why Britain suffers apparently more than the other kingdoms of Europe, will also explain why the different towns and counties of Britain suffer at present exactly in proportion to their former commercial prosperity. In one respect England differs at this juncture from most of the other European nations—our public credit is yet tolerably sound: whilst the governments of Russia, Austria, Poland, France, and Spain, are either bankrupt, or on the verge of bankruptcy, and have had recourse to practices that differ little from open rapine.

I state these facts on authorities, to some of which I shall allude as I go on; but I believe that you will admit them at once as unquestionable.

To seek for the origin of such general calamities within the precincts of a single kingdom, is to labour to no purpose. They are to be traced, as it appears, to the prevalence and extension of the war-system throughout Europe, supported, as it has been, by the universal adoption of the funding-system.* As this idea has not been laid before the public, as perhaps it may not have presented itself fully even to your mind, and as it seems to be of the utmost importance, I must beg leave to unfold it at some length, and to show its application to our own distresses.

Speculative men, Sir, in the retirement of their closets, have delighted to contemplate the progress of knowledge, and to show its happy effects on the condition of our species. The truth seems to be, as was asserted by

* Nothing can be better stated, nor can such remarks be pushed too far.—*Marquis of Lansdown.*

Lord Bacon, that "knowledge is power," or to speak more popularly, that power is increased in proportion to knowledge. But the effects of power on human happiness depend on the wisdom and benevolence by which it is directed; and where these are not found in a corresponding degree, an increase of power must often add to the miseries of the human race. Without, however, disputing the happy influences of the progress of knowledge on the whole, it may be doubted whether these have extended, in any considerable degree, to the general political system; and it may be clearly shown, that its effects on the intercourse of nations with each other have been hitherto, in many respects, injurious.*

Among savages, the means of intercourse are restricted to tribes who are neighbours; and hostilities are confined in the same manner. As knowledge increases, these means are multiplied and extended, and nations not in immediate vicinity learn to mingle in each other's affairs. This is abundantly proved by the history of European nations, among whom treaties offensive and defensive have, with their communication with each other, been constantly increasing for the two last centuries; and wars, without becoming less frequent, have become far more general, bloody, and expensive. The balance of power, a notion springing up among statesmen towards the end of the fifteenth century, has been a principal cause both of the frequency and the extensiveness of modern wars; the religious distinctions which divided Europe after the period of the Reformation, have also been the cause or the pretext of frequent hostilities; and the supposed dignity of crowns, an expression the

* Nothing can be better stated. — *Marquis of Lansdown.*

more dangerous from the obscurity of its meaning, has been constantly enumerated among the reasons which justified the inhabitants of different countries in rushing to the destruction of each other. *

Wars thus originating in causes peculiar to a semi-barbarous state of society, have been extended in other respects by the progress of knowledge and its effects on the arts. To this we are to attribute many of the improvements in the science of destruction, and in the science of finance: to this especially we are to attribute the *funding-system*, which at once multiplied the means of warfare twenty-fold, and which, after anticipating and exhausting the public revenue in almost every nation of Europe, seems at length to approach the point so clearly foretold, when it must produce a system of general peace, or of universal desolation. †

The Italian republics, according to Dr. Smith, first invented funding; from them it passed to Spain, and from the Spaniards to the rest of the European nations. The practice of funding commenced in England with our national debt, during the war which terminated in the peace at Ryswick, in the year 1697, and it has been the means by which this debt has accumulated to its present enormous amount. The system itself is precisely the same, as to the community, that mortgaging the revenue of an estate to raise a present sum of money

* Nothing can be better. The late Lord Granby used to say, that Lord Bute had introduced the phrase "Dignity of the crown," and was always at a loss to know what he meant by it; it is still more absurd applied to a nation. Dignity, however, is not quite the characteristic of any description at present. — *Marquis of Lansdown.*

† Nothing can be better. — *Marquis of Lansdown.*

amined the subject; but the predictions of some enlightened men, as to the sum of debt under which the nation must become bankrupt, having turned out fallacious, ignorant persons have supposed that the principle, on which these predictions were founded, was in itself false. But admitting that Mr. Hume* predicted that a debt of a hundred millions would bring on a national bankruptcy, he erred in his calculation only from not foreseeing the influence of the progress of knowledge on the useful arts, and the increased sources of revenue which would thus be opened. The surprising advances of chemistry, and the effects of its application to manufactures; the wonderful combinations of chemistry and mechanics, for the reduction of labour; these are the happy means by which bankruptcy has been hitherto averted. The security of property, and the spirit of liberty diffused through the nation, have called forth the talents of our people. Britain has grown prosperous in spite of the wretched politics of her rulers. The genius of Watt, Wedgwood, and Arkwright, has counteracted the expense and folly of the American war.

Are we to go on for ever in this extraordinary career?† It is impossible! the sources through which we have

* It does not appear that Mr. Hume was the author of this prediction, which has been generally ascribed to him. It is, however, evident, from his essay on public credit, that he did not foresee the great amount to which the debt might be carried; a circumstance easily explained.

† I might have answered this question in the words of Mr. Chalmers, in his "Comparative Estimate," where he very justly decides, that we can go on incurring debt and fresh taxes, only while commerce and manufactures increase in a corresponding degree. This masterly work will throw much light on our present situation: Lord Hawkesbury will do well to peruse it once more.

been enabled to sustain our enormous burdens are in a great measure dried up, our burdens themselves are increasing, and the whole fabric of our prosperity totters to its base!

Our prosperity depends on commerce; commerce requires peace, and all the world is at war — this is the short and the melancholy history of our situation. The shock is felt in England more than elsewhere, because, as was said before, England is more commercial than any other nation, but it pervades more or less the continent of Europe, from St. Petersburgh to Leghorn: the history of commerce records no calamity so severe and so extensive. Of the houses that remain solvent, it is known that the greater part are struggling with difficulties; that these are hourly increasing; and that distrust and dismay prevail universally. In Britain, as I shall have occasion to show, our mercantile distresses are aggravated by the imprudent confidence, arising out of extraordinary prosperity, which produced a very general over-trading of capital, and in some places a spirit of very unjustifiable speculation; but on the Continent, where bankruptcy and distress began first, the imprudence of the mercantile system seems to have had little share in the failures, which may be traced almost entirely to the war politics of the ruling powers, and the dreadful practices by which these have been supported.

Whoever examines the history of the military establishments of the different European nations, will find that they have been for more than two hundred years almost every where regularly increasing. The means of supporting this increase may have been found, in part, in the gradual augmentation of opulence and population, which perhaps has taken place pretty generally, in spite of the burden of these establishments. But the very

great and sudden increase of the armies brought into the field in the latter end of the last, and the beginning of the present, century, is clearly to be attributed to the funding-system, which about this time became almost universal. From this period the standing forces of Europe during peace have been gradually and regularly augmenting as before, and each successive war has produced more numerous and better appointed armies than that which preceded. The forces employed, the expense incurred, and the destruction produced in the war which terminated in the peace of 1763, far exceeded whatever was before known in the annals of history. Satiated and exhausted with slaughter, the nations of Christendom sunk down into a short-lived repose. This was soon disturbed by the Empress of Russia, whose reign has involved her subjects in perpetual distresses, her neighbours in constant alarms, and has filled the eastern parts of Europe with repeated carnage.* In the west, the torch of war was rekindled by England, and a conflict with her own colonies aided by France, more fruitless, fierce, and bloody, than the war of 1756, dissevered her empire, added a hundred millions to her debt, and six millions annually to her standing taxes.†

* This singular woman affects to be a patroness of learning, and is not destitute of what are called the princely virtues. She has had a kind of humour of sending her picture in gold snuff-boxes to literary men in different parts of Europe. Praise has been openly bestowed on her by Zimmerman, and indeed insinuated by Robertson. Impartial history will record the steps by which the *wife of Peter III. ascended his throne;* it will tell of 30,000 Turks massacred in cold blood at Ismael; it will describe the first and the second division of Poland: and the annalist of better times may record this "august patroness of letters" as the scourge of the human race.

† By the first of these wars we conquered America; by the second we lost it, and thus a balance was struck; but two hundred millions

During these operations in the east and west, the centre of Europe was agitated by the restless and pragmatic temper of the Emperor Joseph. This unwise and unfortunate, but not ill-intentioned prince, was happily controlled by the talents of the great Frederick, who for the last twenty years of his life cultivated the arts of peace, and on several occasions stifled the flames of a general war. The example of the King of Prussia, however, and the mutual jealousy of the continental powers, wonderfully increased the armies of the Continent; and during his reign the peace establishment of Germany, a country containing less than eighteen millions of people, rose to five or six hundred thousand soldiers! By his superior policy the King of Prussia, indeed, contrived to render his army comparatively little burdensome to his subjects, and died with his treasury full.* But Austria and all the inferior powers of Germany have been long very poor. The wants of Joseph were great, those of Leopold greater, and those of the present Emperor are extreme. — Russia is absolutely bankrupt, and the whole body of the peasantry reduced to the most wretched poverty. Spain languishes under an immense load of debt, and the same may be said of Holland, Portugal, and, as I am informed, of the northern powers. — The situation of France needs not to be described.

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of debt were incurred, and five hundred thousand lives sacrificed! "What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasted by."—*Wisdom of Solomon.*

* His successor, it is generally understood, has nearly, if not entirely, dissipated his treasures.

A philosophical mind will discover in every page of history, and will lament, while it excuses, the fatal ignorance of those by whom nations have been governed. General invectives against such characters are however unjust; the rulers of the world ought to be approached with mingled respect and pity. Supreme power to its proper exercise requires perfect wisdom; and monarchs as well as ministers are weak, fallible, and ignorant, like ourselves. Hence it is that we find them in all ages wasting the little hoards of property acquired by private industry, in projects of foolish vanity, or of still more foolish ambition. And hence it is that, during the last century, we have seen them convert even the acquisitions of science and of the arts, rising unprotected in society, to the same fatal purposes; carrying the fury of war by this means into the most remote seas and regions, and exhausting not only the patrimony of a single generation in their rash and ruinous projects, but that of new generations of men for a long succession of years.

In the order of Providence, great evils bring their own remedies, and the funding-system, by exhausting the means of supporting war, has a tendency to produce universal peace. But it is melancholy to reflect on the national bankruptcies, which it must probably render general in the first instance. Their effects will vary as the people are more or less commercial, more or less enlightened. They may for a time rivet the chains of despotism, as in Russia, or raise a bloody anarchy on the ruins of monarchy, as in France. A system of general peace, adopted speedily, may avert a great part of the calamities which hang over Europe; but while passion and prejudice so generally predominate, this, alas! is rather an object of our wishes than our hopes.

It ought, however, to make a deep impression on those who are entrusted with the happiness of nations, that the direct cause of all the troubles in France was the lavish expenditure of its old government, supported by the funding-system. The war of 1756, and that undertaken for the Americans, brought this system to its crisis; the revenue was more than anticipated by the interest of debts and the expense of the government; fresh taxes could not be collected; the people called loudly for a redress of grievances: the court gave way; popular assemblies were summoned, and followed each other in rapid succession; the current of opinion set stronger every day against every thing established; the populace found their strength; numbers, instead of wisdom, began to govern; the practice of change begot a habit of changing, and property and principles were swept away.*

* It is the fate of despotic governments to be placed in general in the hands of fools; and where folly commands, it is ignorance alone that can be obedient. Nothing ever was so palpably absurd as the principles on which France mingled in the American war. She wished to weaken England, and threw her force into the American scale. We had got into a contest which must have been long, expensive, and finally unsuccessful, even had the absolute conquest of the colonies crowned the first years of the war. We were likely, from our pride and prejudices, to persevere to the uttermost; and national bankruptcy could only have arrested our career. France might have looked on in security, taken the opportunity of the calm to have arranged her finances, reformed her abuses, and strengthened herself by the arts of peace. She might have risen on our ruins, the empress of the sea, and the arbitress of Europe.—She openly interfered: the disease which seemed lingering and mortal suddenly became violent; a crisis took place; we threw off the colonies, acknowledged their independence, and re-assuming the arts of peace, became in a few years more prosperous than before. In the mean time France had received a mortal wound: to *prevent the war from*

Happily for England, by great and virtuous exertions, she escaped in the year 1783 the bankruptcy which France incurred. The effects of continued peace on a nation such as ours, are beyond calculation. National confidence and credit being restored, our manufactures spread over the continents of the old and the new world, and our revenue rose on *the basis of circulation* to its late unexampled height. A paper currency of promissory notes and of bills of exchange was a necessary consequence; and this, which ought to have represented specie

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becoming unpopular under the existing burthens, she had carried it on without new taxes, by borrowing only. When peace came, this new debt was to be provided for; the people were poor, discontented, and, what was worst of all, they were in some degree enlightened: the rest is known.

The policy of the powers which are combined against France, is of the same weak and foolish kind. The folly and the crimes of France rendered a civil war inevitable, and Europe might have looked on in safety and peace. This mighty people, weakened by intestine divisions, would have been no longer formidable: and the process of their experiments on government, if left to itself, would have been fruitful of lessons of the most important kind. The neighbouring monarchs met at Pillnitz, and agreed to invade France the first *convenient opportunity*. The treaty was discovered: it gave victory to the republicans without a contest; a civil war was prevented; and the banners of Jacobinism reigned triumphant. The allied powers have carried their treaty into effect; but being burthened with debt already, and the state of the public mind *requiring to be particularly consulted at present*, they are, like France of old, carrying it on by borrowing without laying on taxes, leaving this for the season of peace. The Emperor, I am told, gives nine per cent. for money, to prevent the imposition of taxes; and yet it is said that the unreasonable people of Vienna are not satisfied.

So far the policy of the powers now allied against France, and that of France herself in the American war, are precisely similar. How far the effects may correspond is in the womb of time.

or merchandise only, became in a season of singular prosperity the representation of almost every kind of property fixed and unfixed.

In the mean time affairs on the Continent assumed a hostile aspect. The allied powers began to arm; France armed also. Armaments in countries, comparatively speaking little commercial, required specie. It probably flowed freely from England, for a paper circulation supplied its place. These armaments rendered the people as well as the governments poor, by diminishing and oppressing productive labour, absorbing the wealth that should have been employed in private industry, and obstructing commercial intercourse. Hence our customers did not purchase, or did not pay for, our manufactures; and they began to remain on our hands.

Certain circumstances, however, prevented for a time our feeling the full effect of the war politics on the Continent. In the first place we were at peace, and had declared for a peace-system, while the rest of Europe was agitated and under arms. Hence our funds became a favourite object of purchase for those monied men on the Continent who wished to secure their property; immense sums, it is said, flowed in from France and the Low Countries, and the prices of stock rose for a time, with the decline of our export of manufactures, and the efflux, as it should seem, of the precious metals.

Another circumstance operated in our favour. The war on the Continent increased the demand for particular manufactures, from Germany, and more especially from France—Birmingham felt this, so did Yorkshire. Burning for combat, the *Sans Culottes* rushed into the field—and Arms! arms and clothing! was echoed from Picardy to Provence. These demands could only be supplied

by England. France had ruined her credit by her second revolution; she must come to market with specie; and her gold and silver might have rested with us.—Our true policy was clear.

By this time, however, the sympathies of the different parties in England were excited to such a degree by the state of things on the Continent, that the dictates of sound reason could no longer be heard; and the wickedness of the ruling party in France having perpetrated one deliberate and dreadful murder, calculated to awake the horror of men in an extraordinary degree, the original friends of the revolution became mute; the once sacred name of Liberty itself became offensive; the alarmists rose suddenly in numbers and force; clamours and indignation sprung up in every quarter; and amidst a wild uproar of false terrors, and of virtuous sympathy, the nation was plunged headlong into this dreadful war!

One powerful voice, indeed, was heard above the storm, but the accents of reason and truth sounded like treason to an irritated people, and our rulers joined in the general outcry; the friends of peace incurred the foulest calumnies of the day, but secured to themselves the purest admiration when passion and prejudice shall be no more.

War came; and fast on its heels a dreadful train of evils — bankruptcy followed bankruptcy in rapid succession, our resources seemed to vanish, distrust and terror seized the mercantile world, and the Bank of England itself partook, as it is reported, of the general alarm. In the mean time you are said to have declared in your place, that these evils had no connection with the war, and Mr. Dundas assured us that they arose from our extraordinary prosperity. Similar language is

made use of by the partizans of administration every where; and it is fit that this dreadful error should be publicly unveiled.

In a season of general peace and great prosperity, private as well as public credit had arisen to an extraordinary height; and, from causes very obvious, but which it would be tedious to enumerate, paper-money became in a great measure the medium of circulation. This paper consisted of two kinds: of bills of exchange payable at different dates, and generally discountable; and of promissory notes, issued by the Bank of England and private banking-houses, payable in specie on demand. The credit of each of these depended on their representing a property real and secure. The promissory notes were, indeed, supposed to represent specie at all times ready on demand, but in reality rested for their credit on the basis of some fixed property within the kingdom, and frequently on landed estates; the bills of exchange depended for their circulation on the joint credit of the drawer and the acceptor, and represented in a great measure property out of the kingdom: perhaps on the seas, in the West Indies, on the coast of Africa, in America, or on the Continent of Europe.* By means of this medium a vast quantity of fixed property was brought, as it were, into a state of activity; the paper money in circulation, every kind included, amounting, as I have been told, to a sum that seems almost incredible!† The effects of a war on a paper medium, such as I have described, may be easily ima-

* This subject is very elegantly and fully explained in a pamphlet entitled "Thoughts on the Causes of the present Failures," published by Johnson.

† Two hundred millions.

gined. — It must diminish the security of all property on the seas, in our islands, on the coast of Africa, &c. and of course destroy or impair the credit of all bills of exchange running on the validity of such property. If the property itself during a war would not easily find a purchaser, neither would a bill resting on that property. The property itself, however, might still be saleable, though at a diminished value; but this would not be the case with a bill of exchange, which, if it does not pass for the sum it is drawn for, will pass for nothing, and is thrown out of circulation. The manner in which this distressed our West Indian houses is well known. The degree of hazard of our islands was perhaps over-rated; a circumstance arising from the peculiar nature of the war, and the fears under which we laboured, and still labour, of the desperate methods to which the French may have recourse. Previous to the war in England, bankruptcies had begun on the Continent, and the security of bills of foreign exchange was every day impaired. The invasion of Holland by Dumourier, one of the first consequences of the war, was a blow aimed at the credit of all Europe: our houses concerned in Dutch and other foreign exchanges found their security particularly shaken; many of them are supposed to have tottered, and several fell. A similar effect took place in various parts of the Continent, and the action and reaction of ruin spread far and wide. The invasion and partition of Poland contributed much to this general calamity. The Bank of Warsaw, the deposit of all the surplus wealth of the landed interest of Poland, was oppressed and destroyed by the royal plunderers; it failed, as it is said, for ten millions sterling, and brought down with it various

houses throughout Europe, particularly in Petersburg, Hamburg, and Amsterdam.*

The war deprived our manufactures of the French market, of all others the most extensive, and, as it had been conducted for a twelvemonth past, by far the most safe and lucrative. The general wreck of credit among our allies on the Continent, deprived us in a great measure of the markets there. Orders did not arrive, or if they did arrive, could not be executed; the security of the correspondent was doubted, or the channel of payment shut up. It was soon, therefore, found that our manufactures for the foreign markets had not sustained a temporary check, such as arises from over-trading every sixth or seventh year of peace, but an absolute stagnation; the bills and paper running on the security of the capital vested in machinery (an enormous and lately most productive property) were of course shaken in their credit, and in the course of a few weeks, if a prospect of peace does not open, will be of all others the most insecure. If it were proper on such an occasion to bring forward names, each of these assertions might be supported and illustrated by abundant proofs.

The general result of these particulars is, that whereas, before the war, bills were discountable, and of course entered into circulation from every part of the world, at perhaps eighteen months' date, and sometimes at even longer, distrust and bankruptcy have, for the present, rendered three fourths of the whole waste-paper; and those of the very first credit are in general negotiable at two months' date only. The immense chasm that this must make in circulation may be easily imagined.

* Fifteen houses in Petersburg, concerned in the trade to China, failed together.

This general distress in the commercial and manufacturing interests must of course occasion a great pressure on the monied men. What is their situation? Their property is generally vested in public securities; these must be sold out to meet the exigence at a loss of from twenty to twenty-five per cent. Public securities have already sunk in value, in consequence of the war, to the amount of nearly fifty millions sterling; a sum almost equal to the whole of our national debt at the commencement of the war of 1755!

Land has not escaped deterioration; but for obvious reasons, except in the immediate vicinity of towns, it has suffered less than any other property; and, of course, the security of promissory notes issued by country banking-houses, as far as they depended on landed estates, is, or ought to be, less affected than any other. In the general panic, indeed, runs have been made on almost every house of this kind; a few have failed from insufficient stability, and many have stopped payment for want of specie. But, in general, those who have shown a sufficient foundation of real property have been supported by public confidence; and, in the absolute scarcity of gold and silver, their notes have returned into circulation. In situations where this has happened, the distress is far less than where no circulation of such promissory notes had taken place. It seems the more necessary to state these facts, because in both houses of parliament, some respectable individuals seem disposed to impute our present distresses in a great measure to the increase of banking-houses issuing promissory notes. *

* The Duke of Norfolk is one who has fallen into this mistake.

It may be observed that circulating notes of this kind, each representing a guinea, have long been the universal medium throughout Scotland, where the commercial distress, though great, is much less than in England; not more than one banking-house there having as yet failed. Five-pound notes of the same kind are in common circulation through several of the northern counties, and, in the moment of general panic, were much exclaimed against. But the alarm is subsiding, and confidence returns. * The truth will soon appear to be, that a well secured and well regulated medium of this kind is at this instant of essential service where it circulates; and it is very probable that it will be resorted to in situations where it has not yet been adopted. In Lancashire, where the distress, both in the commercial and manufacturing interests, is, perhaps, greater than in any part of the kingdom, promissory notes were never issued by any of the banking-houses; and to this, I will venture to say, the universal stagnation there is, in some degree, to be attributed. The necessity of resorting to a paper-money generally, which cannot be immediately commuted into specie, would indeed be a proof of extraordinary distress; but it may one day come. There is a situation that a good citizen must brood over in silence, but which the rapid career of our adversity does not admit to be long absent from his thoughts, in which it may be the only national remedy against general ruin and confusion.

Though the banking-houses which circulate promissory notes have not contributed, in any considerable degree, to our present distress, it must be admitted that it has been aggravated by the imprudence of individuals

* See the proceedings at Newcastle, Whitehaven, &c.

in over-trading their capitals, and resorting, in several instances, to the system of drawing and redrawing for supporting their credit. * This, however, is a disease which has a constant tendency to arise in seasons of great prosperity, and which, though it operate severely on particular places, cannot be considered as entering largely into our national distress; not having been without its effect, it gives, I presume, a colour to the assertion of Mr. Dundas; but will even Mr. Dundas say, that the imprudence of a few individuals has destroyed the whole market of our manufactures, or lowered the funds fifty millions?

To this general representation an objection will perhaps occur, that it explains things too clearly; that events can seldom be traced in this regular way; and that politics do not afford any thing so nearly approaching to demonstration. The reply to this is easy: politics have generally for their object the conduct of cabinets; and the uncertainty to which they are liable is chiefly to be imputed to the ignorance and caprice by which cabinets are governed. Hence the difficulty of predicting how they may act, arises from the impossibility of foreseeing with any certainty their motives of action. But that part of the political economy which unfolds the theory of trade and manufactures approaches to the nature of science, because it has the intercourse of commercial men for its object, who are constantly governed by a sense of interest, the most uniform motive of human conduct. We distinguish ill if we suppose that what respects commerce is equally uncertain with what respects politics: the freaks of the mischievous monkey

* Those who wish to see this clearly and fully explained may consult the Wealth of Nations, last edition.

are indeed wild and capricious, but the actions of the industrious beaver are uniform and exact. It may also be objected to this explanation of the causes of our distress, that it is founded on principles which apply to former wars, as well as to that which we are engaged in, while our present calamities are altogether singular and unprecedented. It must be admitted that our distresses are singular in degree; but they are not singular in their nature: in the commencement of all our wars, industry and credit have sustained a similar blow; and it only remains to be shown why the present shock is so peculiarly severe and tremendous.

That the entrance of war has always injured our commercial prosperity, may be proved from the authentic documents in Mr. Chalmers's "Comparative Estimate;" and those who remember the commencement of the last war, must also recollect the distress which it occasioned. The extraordinary ruin of the present moment, compared with that of 1755 or 1775, is to be traced to the change which this nation, as well as the other nations of Europe, has been gradually undergoing, and to the peculiar nature and seat of the existing warfare. At the breaking out of the war in 1755, the debt of Great Britain amounted to seventy-two millions; and now the debt funded and unfunded is nearly two hundred and fifty millions. We set out on the present occasion under an additional weight of almost two hundred millions!

But let us take the commencement of the last war, a period still fresh in our recollections, and when the disparity of situations was not so great. In the beginning of February you held out a prospect that the existing revenue was not likely to fall off in consequence of the present hostilities; because in the first year of the last

war it was not much affected. You seemed to admit that the *progress* of our commerce and manufactures might, indeed, be stopped; but you did not apprehend there would be much, if any, diminution of what we already possessed. The melancholy records of the last three months have detected this fatal error, to which, perhaps, the war itself is in some degree owing; and, painful as is the office, there may yet be some advantage in tracing it to its source. The American war commenced in a gradual manner; our disputes with the colonists had been of several years continuance; and before hostilities broke out, our merchants had foreseen them, and provided against them. The provision, it is true, was far from complete; for though in the year immediately preceding the war very unusual remittances were made from America, yet, on the opening of hostilities, a large capital was locked up in that country, by which the trade of London, Bristol, and Liverpool was considerably injured, and at Glasgow and Whitehaven a very extensive bankruptcy took place. A circumstance, however, distinguished those times from the present, which is of material importance. Previously to the war of 1775, our manufacturers were not much in the habit of exporting on their own accounts. They received their orders chiefly from the merchants here, at whose risk the manufactures were shipped; so that, though the mercantile houses received a severe blow in the rupture with America, the manufacturing capital was, comparatively speaking, little injured. What contributed a good deal to this, was the prohibition of importation laid by the American Congress the year before the war, at a time when remittances to this country were allowed, and were so considerable. In consequence of

this our manufacturers, with their skill and their capitals unimpaired, began early to explore new markets, and to improve those already known; and from this date commenced that rapid increase of export to the Continent of Europe, which saved us from national bankruptcy, and raised us again to our rank among nations. It was soon found that the American market was, comparatively speaking, of little value; and it was found, also, that the superiority of our manufactures forced their way into it, notwithstanding the obstructions of the war. They took a circuitous course, indeed, through Holland: but Yorkshire furnished the greater part of the clothing of the Sans Culottes of America; and though they had set up a republican government, and were rebels, not against Louis XVI. but our own gracious king, no traitorous correspondence bill was moved for by the Attorney-General of the day. *

Since the last peace, however, our manufacturers have almost universally acted as merchants, and shipped their goods on their own account. They have gained possession of the foreign markets, in part from the superiority of their skill, but far more from the superiority of

* It was during this period, if my memory does not fail me, that the Duke of Richmond, who has been so loyally employed of late in fortifying the Tower, was accused in the ministerial papers of having surveyed some parts of the coast, for the purpose of directing the French where they might with safety attack us. It was at this time that Mr. Burke openly boasted in the House of Commons of corresponding with the republican rebel Franklin, intriguing at Paris to bring all Europe on our heads. It was during the same calamitous period that a young statesman, since so well known throughout Europe, began his career, by justifying the republicans of America in their resistance, and reprobating as the height of wickedness and insanity our design of subjugating them by force.

their capital, which has enabled them to give a credit almost every where from twelve to eighteen months. Hence at the present moment our manufacturing capital (contrary to what happened in the beginning of the last war) is, in a great measure, invested in foreign debts. The merchants in the ports of the kingdom felt the calamities of war soonest; but it is on the manufacturing body that it will fall with the most unrelenting ruin. What adds to the distress of the moment is, that the war was not, like the American contest, long foreseen. We had declared for a peace-system; it was clearly our interest to maintain it; it seemed almost suicide in France to provoke a quarrel: mercantile men in both kingdoms deprecated a rupture; and, reasoning on the grounds of mutual interest (the familiar and fundamental principle of plain and sensible men), they could not believe, long after the horizon began to darken, that a storm would ensue: when the clouds burst, they were therefore naked and unprepared.

The difference in the situation of our public burthens is also to be considered in comparing the two periods. We commenced the war with America under a debt of 130 millions; and we start now with a debt of 250. Our peace establishment, the interest of the debt included, was then ten millions annually; it has now mounted to seventeen millions.

It may, however, be supposed that our ability to pay these increased burthens has increased in a proportional degree. I would not undervalue the resources of my country, and I believe this to be true; but it is only true while we continue at peace, and preserve as much as possible the peace of the world. If, indeed, our ability to pay taxes were measured by the state of our exports,

it might be justly doubted whether it has augmented in the degree that is supposed. * But this ability depends in reality on the excess of our productive labour over our wants; and the facility of collecting taxes, a point very important, depends in a great measure on the degree of consumption and circulation. The excess of our productive labour does not appear in our exports, as some are apt to suppose; for much of it has been employed in the creation of new capital, in the increase of buildings and machinery, in the improvement of the soil, and in the opening of new roads and canals, of all modes of employing the national capital by far the most useful. † These improvements were going on with a most happy and accelerated progress; our public burthens were beginning to decrease with the increase of our power of bearing them; and England advanced rapidly towards that ultimate point of prosperity, the

* The average of our exports for the last ten years does not, it is said, exceed seventeen millions, which is not more than three millions greater than the amount they averaged in an equal number of years before the American war. The documents on this subject, however, are not sufficient for accurate statement. — See Mr. Chalmers's *Comparative Estimate*.

† In Lancashire alone, one million of the profits of manufactures and commerce is about to be invested in canals now forming there, if the distresses of the times permit the subscriptions to be paid; and such of the labouring manufacturers as are employed at all, are now chiefly employed in forming these canals. The happy effects of such an application of capital in a single county, and such a county as Lancashire, no one can estimate; but they depend almost entirely on peace. The war has already sunk the value of shares in this property greatly, and it has diminished the carriage on the canals already made more than one half. On this subject authentic information may be obtained from the Duke of Bridgewater. I speak on the authority of a well-informed correspondent.

possibility of which was demonstrated by Dr. A. Smith, with a mathematical precision; and its approach predicted by yourself, in a strain of eloquence that gave to truth all the charms of fiction, and unfolded to an admiring nation a prospect of real happiness, supposed only to exist in the poet's dream! * You knew, however, and you acknowledged, that the continuation of peace was necessary to ensure the blessings you foretold: happy had it been for the nation, if you had seen that it was indispensable to the duration of those we already enjoyed!

It has been imagined by many, that the present war ought to be light in comparison of the last; because then we fought alone, and now all the world is in alliance with us. Mr. Dundas in the House of Commons boasted of this; and declared the intention of ministry was to bring, if possible, every nation of Europe upon France. It is, I presume, in consequence of the operations of this policy, before it was avowed, that Spain and Prussia are now in arms, and that Portugal, Turkey, and the northern powers are openly solicited to join the general confederacy. — Weak and miserable policy! Better far had it been for Britain to have fought France singly, if her power had been twice as great, while the rest of Europe looked on, than to stir up and mingle in this general crusade of folly and ruin. I speak not in the language of a moralist, but of a politician, and of this assertion I challenge the most rigid examination. — What supported us during the American war? the export of our manufactures to countries that could purchase them, because they enjoyed the blessings of peace. But who

* See Mr. Pitt's speech, 17th of February, 1792, on his motion for taking off a part of our taxes.

is there now to buy our manufactures? where is peace now to be found? The nations of Europe are in arms from the White Sea to the Pillars of Hercules, and in the course of the summer there will be upwards of two millions of men in the field. Ancient or modern history states nothing equal to the expense or the extent of this armament, undertaken when the funds of all the belligerent powers are anticipated and exhausted, and national credit is every where (England I hope excepted) about to explode. If the whole population of Europe be a hundred and twenty millions, it will contain twenty-five or thirty millions of men fit for labour, or what are called fighting men. Of this number there is a 12th or 15th part taken from productive labour to that which produces nothing; or, what illustrates the point more clearly, brought into the same situation with respect to the public, as if the whole became paralytic in a day, and yet required not only the same subsistence as when capable of labour, but one much more expensive. But as the men called into the field are in the flower of life, the productive labour diminished will be more than in proportion to their numbers, and as they are to combat far from home, the expense of their maintenance while soldiers will double and treble what mere cessation from labour would have produced. The stock of productive labour left must however not only be subject to all former burdens, but oppressed with the maintenance of the labourers taken from it and turned into soldiers, and thus the loss will be more than doubled. It is possible that in some parts of Europe famine may arise, but this is not likely to be a general or an immediate effect. Subsistence is such an evident want and such an irresistible call, that the ground will always be cultivated in the first

instance.—The labourers taken from agriculture for the field, will have their places supplied by others deprived of their usual labour in manufactures, which the war has injured or ruined; and poverty, by teaching men less expensive habits both of diet and clothing, will protract the hour of absolute want. It is in the seat of war only that famine may be considered as inevitable; it is there also that disease may soon be expected; contagion will scatter her poison, and destroy more than the sword. The elasticity of human exertions cannot be exactly calculated; and it would be rash to predict, how, or to what extent these may operate under burdens so heavy and so general. It seems however unavoidable, that during the continuance of the war these burdens must every where increase. If the support of life becomes even difficult, the collection of revenue will become impossible: from the shrivelled muscles and dried bones of their starving peasantry, the conquerors of Poland, and the invaders of France will not be able to extract the support of their senseless ambition and foolish waste.

It is evident that this general poverty must operate peculiarly, and every day more heavily, on Britain. Since the last war this country has become the storehouse of the nations of Europe, and has furnished almost the whole stock of the superfluities they have been enabled to buy. We see clearly that it is the consumption of these superfluities which the war must first destroy; experience has rendered this truth incontestible. Those who live by the manufacture of these superfluities, must therefore be the first and greatest sufferers in every part of Europe, and unfortunately the greater part of this description of men live here. Here then the ruin must be most severely felt, and our sufferings will be the

greater and the harder to bear, because they will be in the exact proportion of our former *prosperity*. It is very clear then, that had we even ourselves continued at peace, while the other belligerent powers were at war, we should have suffered much from the progress of universal poverty.—There are, however, advantages attending such a situation, which, with prudent management, might have borne us through the difficulties. We should have supplied the clothing of the various armies in the field, we should have employed a monopoly of the sale of arms, artillery, and the other means of destruction; we should have become the universal carriers of provisions and warlike stores, we should have been enabled to convey our own manufactures in safety wherever any sale for them remained; and we should have been saved the enormous and destructive expense of arming and protecting our extended commerce in the different quarters of the globe. Our possessions in the east and in the west would have remained secure, and the credit of our paper circulation continued unimpaired. While the storm raged on the land, England might have declared the ocean inviolable, and if the warring powers had disturbed it, she might have reared her head above the waves, extended her immortal trident, and bid the tempest be still.* Holding in her possession a great part of the clothing, the arms, and the stores of the powers at war, and being at the same time the undisputed mistress of the sea, and the great channel of intercourse between nations — when the strength and fury of conflicting passions were sated with blood or subdued

* Maturate fugam, regique hæc dicite vestro:
Non illi imperium pelagi, sævumque tridentem,
Sed mihi sorte datum.—— VIRGIL. ÆN. I.

with slaughter, she might have denounced her vengeance on the aggressors, have offered her succours to the oppressed, and dictated the terms of universal peace. — Such our situation might have been — nay, must have been, had we not become parties in the general strife. What is our situation now? We are involved ourselves in the quarrel; there is no nation of Europe left to mediate between the conflicting powers; and if England does not again assume the office of umpire, nothing but the extermination of the French, or the downfall of the governments of Germany, seems capable of satisfying the enraged parties, or restoring the peace of the world. But it may be said, it is better for us to fight France now, with all the world with us, than to fight her hereafter alone. Why should we fight her at all? — it is not our interest. But it may be supposed that the ambition of France, when her government is settled, will compel us to go to war in self-defence. I do not think this likely, because it cannot be *her* interest, but we will allow the supposition. If France attack us, it must be on the sea, our favourite element, and there she will, I doubt not, find our superiority once more.— There she found our superiority in the American contest, though she employed her whole resources on her marine, though she was aided by Spain, Holland, and America, and though she attacked us when we were in some degree exhausted by three expensive and bloody campaigns.

If France and England combat alone, it must be on the sea, and destructive though the contest must be, it is not likely of itself either to endanger our constitution or destroy our credit, as some have weakly supposed. Our constitution is enthroned in the hearts of Englishmen,

and will never be destroyed by foreign force; our credit depends on our commerce, but more especially on our manufactures, which we know by experience can survive a rupture with France, and even increase during its continuance, *provided the rest of Europe is at peace.** Unfortunately at present all Europe is not only engaged in war. but in a war of unexampled desperation and expense, at a time when public debts and taxes have accumulated to an enormous degree in almost every one of the belligerent powers; where the governments (that of our own country always excepted) are universally oppressive, and the people poor and wretched.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Hume, treating on the effects of public credit, observed, that it must either destroy the nation, or the nation must destroy it. "I must confess," says this profound observer, "when I see princes and "states quarrelling, amidst their debts, funds, and public "mortgages, it always brings to my mind a match of "cudgel-playing fought in a china shop."† Since the time this was written, the public debts of the European nations have been more than doubled, taking the whole together, and those of France, Britain, and Russia, have increased almost fourfold. The figure of Mr. Hume may now perhaps be a little altered. The pre-

* I would not however be understood to consider a war with France, or with any other country, in any other light, under our circumstances, than in that of a most serious calamity. I wish to point out the peculiarity in the present war, that makes it to us particularly destructive. It is the general state of warfare, and the consequent poverty, that is our bane. In regard to some of the powers now under arms, if they are to be at war, it is of little consequence to us as to the actual force they can bring forward, whether they fight with or against us.

† Essay on Public Credit.

sent match of cudgel-playing is indeed in a china-shop, but the walls of the house are now become china also. If the performers get very warm in the business, they may therefore not only destroy the moveables, but bring the house itself about their ears.

I heard a member in the House of Commons pleading with great eloquence for our plunging into the war with France, and call out — Perish our commerce, if it must perish, but let our constitution live! * The words were foolish: — the separation is no longer possible. The vital principle of our constitution — the division and distribution of its powers, may indeed survive the ruin of commerce; and provided the whole people be enlightened, it may be perpetuated after the wreck of our power. The spirit of our religion may be preserved after the decay of our riches, and poverty and sorrow may even render it more pure. The equal principle of our laws, now contained and exemplified in five hundred volumes in folio, may appear perhaps as beautiful, when the destruction of property shall have rendered 499 volumes of statutes obsolete, and a single volume comprises all that our poverty demands. But the blessings of our constitution in the eye of those who administer, or hope to administer its powers, depend, I conceive, on our opulence, and must perish with the commerce from which that opulence flows. Let those therefore who wish for *things as they are*, beware of war: true patriots, who abhor civil convulsions, will cherish the arts of peace.

"Perish our commerce" — foolish words! What affords three millions annually to the poor? A million and a half annually to the church? What supplies a

* This expression is attributed to the late Mr. Windham. — *Editor.*

million to the civil list? — Our commerce. What supports the expense of our immense naval and military establishments? All our places and pensions? What but our commerce. Thirteen millions of our taxes depend on circulation and consumption, and this thoughtless senator cries out — "Perish our commerce, let our constitution live." But how then must the necessary splendour, the patronage, and the far more extensive influence of the crown be supported? And if this splendour, patronage, and influence are swept away — where is our constitution? What shall maintain the crown against a band of factious nobles cajoling the people with the sound of liberty to cover their selfish ambition; or what shall defend hereditary honours and property of every kind against the great mass of the nation, now become poor, and therefore desperate; ravenous, perhaps, from their wants, and terrible from the remainder of spirit and pride which has descended from better times?*

Our constitution and our commerce have grown up together; their connection was not at first a necessary one perhaps, but events have rendered it such; the peace and the safety of England depend on its being

* The author can throw out hints only at present; but in favour of the prerogative of the crown, as things are situated, he has much to offer.

"The idea cannot be enough inculcated, of the necessity of strengthening the executive at the same time as the legislative. The history of all free nations, from the Roman empire downwards, proves it. A king of England, standing on his just prerogative, is a hundred times more *dignified*, more secure, and more efficient than standing on any system of corruption; but his prerogative should be known, supported, and valued, as the second palladium of the constitution."— *Marquis of Lansdown.*

preserved. Our very habits and manners, and the structure of society among us, are founded on this union. I know the evils of our situation, but the heavy load of our debts and taxes must teach us to submit. Patience, peace, economy, and gradual reformation, are the remedies that wise men would point out: the chance of more dangerous means being resorted to, arises from the folly of one class, who deny these evils, and by denying aggravate them; and from the folly of another, who pronounce them intolerable, and would listen to the counsels of enthusiasts or knaves. At present, never was a nation more submissive, or more loyal; but a wise minister will not wantonly try our patience, or goad us too much.

"Perish our commerce!"—Let the member for Norwich correct his expression. We will excuse the inaccuracy of an ardent and eloquent mind; we will even make allowance for the prejudices of education — in the school of Mr. Burke, trade and manufactures are words that sound meanly: among the Jesuits of St. Omers, the words themselves were perhaps unknown. Early education, natural taste, and peculiar sublimity of imagination, have made, I presume, the detail and the exactness of commerce, disgusting to Mr. Burke; and have furnished his mind with those grand and obscure ideas, that associate with the lofty manners of chivalry, and the Gothic gloom of a darker age. Hence, probably (since time, by extinguishing ambition, has restored the original habits of his mind), we are to explain his strong preference of the feudal relics of our constitution, and his dread of the progress of commerce, as leading to innovation and change. I do not wish to break a

lance with the champion of aristocracy, or with any of his followers; and I would concede in their favour as much as truth will admit. If our society were to be cast anew, if the interests of our country were alone to be consulted, and the means were entirely at our command — much as commerce is to be valued, it would be wiser and better to give it less share in our prosperity, and at all events to render our revenue independent of foreign trade. How far it might be desirable to control its effects on our manners, and on our habits of thinking, is a question that I cannot enter on, at present. Consulting our taste, and setting moral considerations aside, we should perhaps be willing to preserve a greater degree of correctness and purity of manners, and more of the nice and high-spirited sense of honour, than commerce generally admits. But if we try different characters by the test of utility, and found this test on the actual state of the nation, the knight of chivalry and his various offspring, compared to the modern manufacturer or the merchant, seem weak and useless things. Even the country gentleman of England, the most respectable character of all those *lilies of the valley who neither toil nor spin*, sinks in this comparison. The proprietor of landed property, who lives on the income of his estates, can in general be considered only as the conduit that conveys the wealth of one generation to another. He is a necessary link in society indeed, but his place can at all times be easily supplied: in this point of view the poor peasant who cultivates his estate is of more importance than he. How then shall we estimate him when compared with a respectable manufacturer — with the original genius, for instance, who has found means to convert our clay into porcelain, and lays all Europe

under contributions to England by his genius, taste, and skill? Or what rank will he take, when his exertions are put in competition with the power and enterprise of the merchant, whose ships visit the most remote shores and nations; to whom the coasts of Asia, and America, are familiar; who draws his wealth from the wilds of Nootka or Labrador, and who makes the distant Pacific yield up its stores? Even in his more elevated situation in the House of Commons, the country gentleman, however eloquent and virtuous (Mr. Windham himself), must not be compared, as an object of national consequence, with a character like this.

To the considerations which I have offered on the importance of commerce and manufactures, and on the effects already produced on them by the war, you, Sir, if you were more in the habit of explaining ministerial conduct, might perhaps reply — that the war is a war of necessity — that it is likely to be short and successful — and that, at all events, the dignity of the nation (the phrase used in the American war) or perhaps of the crown (for this is now the more correct expression of Lord Grenville) is concerned in carrying it on. On each of these points I mean to offer a few observations. I will then endeavour to show the state the nation is likely to be in, on the recess of Parliament; I will make some observations on the terrible responsibility that ministers assume, and conclude with one or two remarks addressed more particularly to yourself.

The war was necessary, as its supporters say, and this necessity is explained in different ways. — By a few it is asserted that the French were determined to quarrel with us, and that they declared war against us at a time that

it was unexpected and unprovoked.* This language, however, is held by very few, and is indeed so utterly inconsistent both with fact and probability, that nothing but ignorance or disingenuousness can employ it. The French were fighting, or thought they were fighting, for their national existence, against a combination of the most alarming kind; — to what purpose should they add England to the number of their enemies? — England, whose power they knew by fatal experience — whose irresistible force on the ocean they had repeatedly sunk under — and whose neutrality seemed almost essential to their procuring the means of carrying on the war. If it be asserted that they hoped to excite commotions among us, peace seemed necessary to this scheme; for during peace only could they carry on the intercourse which such a plan would require. Idle threats of internal commotions were indeed thrown out by some individuals among them, but that these commotions would be directly promoted by an open war, this could only be sincerely expected by men who were before insane. It may however be said, that insanity did in reality pervade their councils, or those at least by whom their councils were influenced; and indeed this supposition seems in a great measure founded on truth. But the reply to this is clear: how far soever their insanity might go, it did not extend to a war with England, a calamity not only deprecated by their rulers, but by the whole body of the people. There is not an individual who has been in

* You would be astonished to know upon what moderate terms the French were ready to end the war, even up to January 1794, and how haughtily rejected. If this be alluded to, it may be done pointedly but distinctly. — *Marquis of Lansdown.*

France since the revolution, who will not confirm this truth.* The manner in which this fierce nation humbled itself to England in negotiation, was indeed very remarkable: and though in a moment of wounded pride the actual declaration of war came from them, yet they soon repented of their conduct, and are now openly renewing their endeavours, one might almost say, their solicitations, for peace.† Peace and war, Mr. Pitt, were in your choice — they are in your choice now; you made your election of the latter — you adhere to it; to the late application of Le Brun, it is said, that you have not even vouchsafed an answer.

It might seem, indeed, from the whole of your conduct towards France for a twelvemonth past, that England had a particular interest in the continuance of war; or if she is supposed to be too proud to be governed by her sense of interest, that her honour was concerned in the keeping up of hostilities, or her passions gratified by the continuance of destruction.

It is well known that the treaty of Pillnitz was the source of all the present hostilities; and it might have been foreseen that an attempt to carry it into effect would produce a great part of the calamities which have ensued. At the time that this took place, the constitution of

* The National Assembly had probably been deceived respecting the sentiments of the people of this country, but previous to the war they had discovered their error. The decree of the 19th of November might perhaps be somewhat influenced by their notion of the existence of a republican spirit here, and in this respect the addresses from different bodies of Englishmen did great mischief. But the effects of the proclamation had shown the real temper of the nation in a clear and striking light, and this was well understood in France when they were negotiating for peace.

† See the letters of M. Le Brun to Lord Grenville, Star, 22d. May.

France was settled; the king and the people had sworn to obey it. There was in it a good deal to praise, and much to blame; but, for reasons which it would be useless to detail, it was on the whole impracticable. The men of talents and influence in France had, however, seen their error in weakening the executive power too much; they were rallying round the throne; and the army, headed by the purest and most popular character in the nation, were acquiring every day, more and more, military habits and virtues. The constitution, with all its faults, had produced the most sensible advantages to the labouring part of the people *; it contained within itself the means of correcting both its principles and practice; and there was perhaps a chance that these might have been remedied without a civil war. It is, however, far more probable that a civil war must have ensued; but, if the parties had been left to themselves, there is no one will deny that Fayette and his friends, in possession of all the constitutional authorities, would in all human probability have been victorious, and the ill-fated monarch have preserved his life and his crown. In the mean time the rest of Europe might have rested in peace — the constitution, modelled, perhaps, on our own, would have assumed a more practicable and consistent form, and liberty been established on law.

The danger to which the final triumph of the new constitution was exposed, arose from a foreign war. If the neighbouring nations should attempt an invasion of France for the avowed purpose of restoring its ancient government, from that instant it was evident that the constitution and the king himself were in extreme hazard. By the constitution, the whole means of the

* See the Tour of Mr. Arthur Young.

nation's defence against this invasion must be trusted in the hands of the king himself, to replace whom in unlimited power the invasion was made. Among a people intoxicated with liberty, and jealous in the extreme, it was impossible that any wisdom could, in such circumstances, secure an already suspected monarch from the imputation of treachery. As the danger from this treachery became greater, the passions of the people arose; when the Duke of Brunswick entered France, they burst into open insurrection, and, through a scene of dreadful slaughter, the constitution was overturned, and the monarch dethroned. This crisis was foreseen by the Jacobins, and by every means provoked; it was foreseen by the Feuillans (the true friends of liberty and of limited monarchy), and earnestly deprecated. The virtuous monarch himself was sensible of his danger, and in his extreme distress applied to England to avert it. It was evident that the Emperor would not venture on this invasion without the aid of our ally the king of Prussia, who had no more pretence for attacking France than for his invasion of Poland, in which such flagrant wickedness and such detestable hypocrisy have been openly displayed. The unhappy Louis entreated our interference to detach the king of Prussia from his design, in language the most pressing and most pathetic. Such an opportunity of exerting great power on a most sublime occasion, and to the noblest of purposes, is not likely to recur in a single age, and is reserved by Providence for its choicest favourites. Such an opportunity was presented to you, and you weakly and blindly cast it away.

The language which you put into your sovereign's mouth on that occasion is on record. Professing every

good wish for the king of France, mankind were then told, that the king of England could not interfere, unless he was requested by all the parties concerned; that is, not only by him in distress, but by those also whose conduct occasioned the danger! The conspirators at Pillnitz, and the Jacobins of Paris, equally triumphed on this occasion. The constitution and liberties of France were the objects of their common attack. At the same instant foreign war and internal insurrection fell with all their furies on the friends of the king, of law, and of order; the streets and the prisons of Paris overflowed with their blood; and those who escaped the daggers of the Jacobins were seized on the frontier by our ally of Prussia, loaded with chains, and sent to the dungeon of Magdeburg to perish in silence, or suffer in hopeless captivity worse than death can inflict. Gratified in the destruction of their common enemy, the votaries of superstition and of enthusiasm have met in dreadful conflict; a war of unexampled fury has ensued; and, after the sacrifice of a hundred thousand lives, the flower of the youth of France and Germany, the hostile armies are precisely in the same situation as when the carnage began!

Another opportunity had, in the mean time, offered for England to interfere, and to restore the peace of Europe. — Winter produced a temporary suspension of hostilities. It is well known that Prussia, baffled and worn out, wished, during this armistice to make its peace with France, and that Spain was about to settle its difference with her also. Austria, left alone, was unequal to the contest; and by our mediation peace might have been restored. Difficulties had, indeed, occurred: France had not only repelled her invaders, but had in

her turn become the aggressor; and Flanders had been overrun by the arms of the victorious republic. The possession of Flanders by France might not only weaken Austria too much (I use the language of politicians), but expose Holland to be invaded and overrun. France must therefore be induced to renounce Brabant. In the mean time there were new difficulties in the way of negotiating with France, from the change which had taken place in its government. Those who had hardly been able to see with patience the representative of the constitutional king, could not be expected to receive with kindness the delegate of the new republic. If, however, we treated at all, it must be with those who held the reins of government,—men, it must be acknowledged, against whom the feelings of almost every heart in England revolted. A minister is, however, to consult his reason, not his feelings, and to listen only to the interests of his country. If these require peace, his duty is to procure it by every fair and reasonable means; and if he treats at all, to treat with temper, even though his opponents are *robbers in their cave*. If war, on the other hand, be inevitable, his business is evident—to refuse all negotiation, and to let loose the whole force of the state. You took a middle course; the dangers of war could not be altogether overlooked. You would treat, therefore, but under a delicate distinction, which was to appear to our allies as if we did not treat at all; and, as it should seem, to secure your honour, you set out in the business with *refusing the right of your antagonists to hold a treaty*. Le Brun and his associates, however, submitted; it is known that they were ready to have renounced Brabant, rather than go to war with England; and universal peace was, perhaps, once more

in your power. By this time, however, the nation was inflamed to a great degree by the apprehension of internal conspiracies; and the dreadful anathemas of Mr. Burke in the House of Commons had destroyed all temper and moderation. From Mr. Fox the mention of peace with France had been received almost with execration, and England was pervaded with the spirit of the ancient crusades. In this situation every moment became more critical: you hesitated; negotiation was one day begun and the next abandoned. Standing on the brink of a precipice, you dallied with the temper of two inflamed nations, and were pushed forward into this bloody war. If you did not act as a great statesman on this occasion, some apology may be found for you, — your temper was, perhaps, irritated; your sense of honour and your feelings of sympathy outraged; and though the minister cannot be pardoned, the man may stand excused. Deeply as I lament the war and its consequences, I must fairly admit that the madness of the moment renders it doubtful whether it could have been avoided during the last days of negotiation, by any measures in your power. * Indecision is certainly not a part of your character in seasons of difficulty or danger; but on this occasion it seems fairly to be imputed to you; and to this it was owing that the *alarmists* had taken the nation out of your hands.

Without imputing bad motives to those who stood forward to propagate the rumours of internal sedition and conspiracy on that occasion, it may now, I think, be said pretty confidently, that their fears greatly magnified the real danger. Why they were terrified, and

* True, perhaps; but who produced the madness of the moment? —*Marquis of Lansdown.*

why their terrors were in a great measure vain, may be easily understood by any one acquainted with human nature, who looks at all the events of that period with an impartial eye. The retreat of the Duke of Brunswick, the battle of Jemappe, and the conquest of Flanders, came so rapidly and so unexpectedly upon us, that men who had blindly wished, and weakly predicted, the immediate subjugation of France to the Prussian arms, were seized with a sudden terror proportioned to their foolish hopes. France, marching with giant strides over her frontier, seemed to threaten the world. Those who, in the first instance, had not taken into their calculation the force of enthusiasm acting on a great and powerful nation in a moment of external invasion, could not, it may reasonably be supposed, form any just opinion of its nature or extent; and saw, in their frightened imaginations, not only the downfall of the despotic governments of Europe, but the overthrow of our own happy constitution, the source of so many blessings, and the well-earned purchase of more than one revolution, and of many years of civil war. On the other hand, the surprising success of the French raised to a high elevation of spirits all those who, from whatever motives, had interested themselves in their favour; and the classic grace with which the spear of liberty was wielded at Jemappe, threw a momentary veil over former proceedings, too foul to bear the light. In this situation of things it was impossible that parties feeling so differently should not be mutually offensive to each other, and that those who triumphed for the moment should not become subjects of apprehension to those already so dreadfully alarmed.

During this state of jealous fear, strong confirmations could not be wanting; for "trifles light as air" would

have served the purpose: and it is well known that even the very looks of the supposed republicans were stated in the House of Commons as proofs of their seditious views. * It must, however, be acknowledged that there was great folly and indiscretion, to say no worse, in the conduct of many of the *new Whigs*†; and that the addresses to the National Assembly from the societies in England, however they might be intended, were incapable of producing any good, and were pregnant with the most serious evils. Whether any thing resembling a plot really existed, cannot perhaps be as yet ascertained. Floating notions of change probably pervaded the imaginations, and occasionally escaped the lips, of enthusiasts; but it does not appear at all likely that any plan for this purpose was concerted or

* By Mr. Wallace. See Parliamentary Debates.

The President de Thou, in the admirable preface to his History, reflecting on the spirit of persecution which existed at the time of the heresy of Priscillian, observes, "Et certainement on trouvoit alors peu de différence entre les orthodoxes et les hérétiques: on jugeoit plutôt de ces derniers par l'air de leur visage, et par leurs habits, que par leur doctrine." De Thou says, that the same thing occurred in France in the civil wars in his own time: "On marquoit d'un coup d'œil comme dignes de la mort une infinité de personnes suspectes, non par leurs mœurs ou par leur conduite, mais par l'air de leurs visages, ou par leur habillement. Alors dans la chaleur des disputes, la haine, la faveur, la crainte, l'inconstance, la paresse et l'orgueil de ceux qui étoient dans le gouvernement, fomentoient les factions, et après avoir mis le trouble dans l'état, exposoient la religion aux plus grands périls." I quote the translation into French, published at London 1734, vol. i. p. 317.—*Marquis of Lansdown.*

† This description of men has not yet got a name that both they and their opponents admit — Patriots and Jacobins are the party designations: I choose a middle term, and quote for this appellation the authority of Mr. Burke.

the nation for the constitution is to plunge us into all the horrors and miseries of a foreign war, I would point out the consequences that may possibly result from the rebound of general sentiment; from the union of starving ignorance with desperate ambition; and from the progress of poverty, misery, and discontent. But I do not think it necessary at present to insist on such topics; because, blindly and foolishly as such men have acted on their own principles, I believe the season of delusion is passing, and that Englishmen will be able to distinguish, under every event, the substantial excellence of our constitution; and attribute their sufferings, whatever they may be, to their own delusion, and the madness of those who have misled the public mind.

But it may be said that the war is likely to be short and successful, and is therefore now to be persisted in, however indiscreetly it may have been begun.

The answer to this is not difficult. The war has had already all the success that we could hope for: it brought on the invasion of Holland, and that invasion is repelled; it has obliged the French to abandon Flanders,—to do that by force, which they were before inclined to do by negotiation: it has covered the sea with our ships of war, and made the merchantmen, both of France and England, disappear: and, finally, after several hard fought battles, it has enabled the King of Prussia to lay siege to Mentz, and the Prince of Cobourg to sit down before Valenciennes. But what is really of importance, it has brought from the French new offers of peace.

What then may be the cause why we so proudly and sullenly (as it is said) reject them?

It may be said that we wish to carry on the war till we

obtain a barrier against the future irruptions of the French into Holland or Brabant; and that this being effected, we mean with our allies to rest on our arms, and leave the nation to settle its own government. If this be our policy, it were far better to rest now. *

* The following curious facts may serve to illustrate the disjointed views of the allies, and the Machiavelian policy of the Empress of Russia:—

In November 1793, the King of Prussia having been sounded afresh, by the Austrian cabinet, regarding Bavaria (our treaty was signed with him the preceding July), thought proper to communicate to the Empress of Russia, in a letter written from the army by his minister, under his own immediate direction, his apprehension of danger affecting the balance of that part of Europe (meaning Germany); and his watchfulness to prevent the power of France from being lessened, as she could not be deprived of the countries or provinces which she possessed before the war without the utmost danger to the general balance: that he acted entirely on this view, but it had already cost him so much, that he was almost sinking under the weight.

The answer from the Empress deprecated this view of things in very strong terms, and expatiated on the bad consequences that must result from this system of conduct; and this answer was either accompanied, or immediately followed, by a letter in the Empress's own handwriting, in which she set forth the bad policy of such conduct, and enlarged on the common aristocratic arguments about the rights of sovereigns, anarchy, &c.; adding, that he (the King of Prussia) had 150,000 men, and that he could very well spare 50,000 to act upon the Rhine: that she had suffered him to take two slices of Poland at a very little expense, by which she had made England and Austria her bitter enemies: that the state of her finances was much altered for the worse, which might be easily comprehended, as she had had two long wars with but a very short interval; and yet she contributed much more than he did to the common cause, by the vast expense she was at to keep the neutral powers back who would otherwise have joined the French, (whom, by the by, she suffered to convey all manner of naval stores to the French, under the flimsy pretence of just stopping at Copenhagen;) and by her total breaking off of all commercial intercourse with France, by proclam-

The probability of obtaining and of preserving peace depends, in a great measure, on the terms which are offered according with natural principles of equity. That every nation should keep within its own confines, and choose its own government, without molesting its neighbours, is a proposition which is agreeable to our common apprehensions of justice; and, applied fairly and equally to the powers at war, it may produce a speedy and lasting peace. But to insist, as a groundwork of such a treaty, that the Austrians shall obtain and keep possession of those strong fortresses on the northern frontier, by which France is defended, is to propose that which is equally offensive to the pride and alarming to the fears of Frenchmen, and which is likely to occasion a vast and fruitless effusion of human blood. "Shall we consent," they will cry, "that France shall be dismembered? Shall we abandon our countrymen of Lisle and Valenciennes to the despots of Germany? If we give up a part of our territory, what security shall we have that the dividers of Poland will rest contented with a part, especially when, by possessing our strong holds, they may invade us at pleasure, and march at once into

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ation in most explicit terms. She added, that so far from thinking France would lose all manner of consideration in Europe if French Flanders, Alsace, and Lorraine were cut off from her, France would still remain a vast power, though she might be unable to do all the injustice to which she had hitherto been accustomed.

I will not answer for the words, but I am positive as to the sentiments; and yet we are negotiating with Prussia. If the Duke of Brunswick accepts the commands of the Duke of York's army, I hope it will be to make peace, not war, of which first he is very capable. He has been always inclined to peace, and I take him to be unalterably Prussian.—*Marquis of Lansdown.*

the heart of our defenceless country?" Such are the questions that will be asked; and it must be acknowledged that they are founded on natural feelings and reasonable fears: before these are subdued, many a brave man will perish in the field. But if, indeed, the security of the Low Countries be our only object, why not fortify Namur, Mons, Tournay, &c. which the Emperor Joseph dismantled, under an idea (which illustrates very strongly the folly of attempting to look far into futurity) that the marriage of his sister with the unfortunate Louis would render a barrier needless on the side of France? If those fortifications, which were thought sufficient against Louis XIV., are not sufficient against the proud republicans, why not erect others? And if bankrupt Austria cannot do this, let us (if we must mingle in their affairs) be taxed to support them; but let it be for an expenditure that will terminate in peace.*

The real interest of foreign nations is not whether France shall have a constitution of this or that form; it is, that she shall have a regular government of some form or other, which may secure the faith of treaties, and due subordination to law; and this is the interest of the people of France themselves more than any other. Why then, it may be said, do they not follow their interest? Because they do not perceive it. And they are prevented from perceiving it by the pressure of external war.

* The idea of fortifying Namur, &c. is going back to the old system, and is not to be endured. If a barrier is wanted on that side against France, which is most likely to prove strongest, an independent republic, or fortifications intrusted to any of the intriguing powers on the Continent?—*Marquis of Lansdown.*

Revolutions of government call forth great talents and virtues, but they also too frequently call forth great crimes. Where all the usual ordinances of law and society are broken down, men will rise indeed in some degree according to their activity and powers, but in a degree, too, according as these are exerted without scruple or restraint. In the enthusiastic state of mind by which revolutions are accompanied, great crimes make little impression on the *million*, provided they are committed in the spirit of party, and under the appearance of patriotism. Compassion, charity, candour, and even a sense of justice, are too generally swept away in the whirlwind of passion and prejudice, and lie buried under the wreck of virtuous habits and principles, to revive in quieter times. In such a state of things the natural influence of integrity and property, as well as the artificial distinctions of rank and birth, give way to the governing power of enthusiasm; and men often rise to direction and command from the lowest stations, by the force of strong talents and bold tempers, and by the buoyancy of heated imaginations.

Enthusiasm is in seasons of danger felt by virtuous as well as by unprincipled minds; by the former, indeed, perhaps more than the latter; but in virtuous minds, while it expands all the generous feelings, it does not destroy the restraints of principle or honour, even towards antagonists or enemies, and much less towards those embarked in the same cause.

Revolutions, however, in their progress, stir up society more and more, even to the very dregs, and bring forward more and more of ignorance and profligacy (terms which in political life are nearly convertible) into the general mass of feeling and of action, in which the

national will and the national force reside. Men who wish to guide this will, and direct this force, in times of popular commotion, must partake of its character, and vary their conduct with the rapid changes which the general sentiment undergoes. But in every great revolution this sentiment has a tendency to become gradually worse, and the character of those at the helm must become worse also. In the course of this melancholy progress, therefore, men of real principle and pure honour, who cannot bend to the opinions of the day, are probably thrown off, or perhaps destroyed, and are succeeded by other descriptions, each in succession more unlike the first, till at last perhaps the unprincipled and desperate obtain undisputed sway.

Hence, in our own country, the resistance to Charles I. which was led by Hampden and Falkland, terminated in Cromwell and Lambert; and hence the revolution of France, originating with La Fayette, Necker, and Mirabeau, has descended into the hands of Danton and Robespierre.* The influence, however, of men who

* The American revolution may be instanced as an exception to this general representation, but improperly. We must first observe (as was noticed by Mr. Fox in his speech on Mr. Grey's motion), that in America, though there was a change of the governing power, there was no revolution of habits or opinions: no sudden change of principles. It must be observed also, that the Americans had much less of poverty and ignorance among them (though less knowledge, no doubt,) than what is to be found in England and France. And, thirdly, it must be observed, that something of the same kind did actually take place in America, as in England and France, though certainly in a less degree. Round the American revolution, as well as the American character, a false glare has been thrown by the splendour of their success. The Congress did not, like the National Assembly, expose their debates and dissensions to their own people, much less to all Europe; but it is well known that a party prevailed

openly violate the first obligations, as well as the most palpable interests of society, is exposed to continual danger from the very scaffolding on which it is raised, and cannot survive that heated and enthusiastic state of mind which extinguishes for a time, and for a time only, the feelings of compassion and the sense of justice.

Enthusiasm is, from its very violence, of short continuance; it produces the most cruel desolations in society: but, as Mr. Hume has observed, "its fury is "like that of thunder and tempest, which exhaust them-

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in it to a considerable degree, and Washington himself, if report speaks truth, was at one time preserved in his command by a single vote only. In the course of the revolution many bloody deeds were acted, the memory of which need not now be revived. But the following quotation from the History of the American Revolution by Dr. Ramsay, himself a member of the Congress, will show how the morals of the people were affected, and bear testimony to the author's candour and love of truth: "Time and industry have already, in a great degree, repaired the losses of property, which the citizens sustained during the war; but both have hitherto failed in effacing the taint which was then communicated to their principles, nor can its total ablution be expected till a new generation arises, unpractised in the iniquities of their fathers." If, indeed, Dr. Ramsay had not acknowledged this, the conduct of the assemblies which were elected immediately after the revolution, would sufficiently prove it. By these assemblies, standing on a popular basis (especially by that of South Carolina), acts were passed dissolving the obligations of justice in a way as arbitrary, and nearly as open, as those of the most despotic monarch whatever. An experience of the evils resulting from such outrages has reformed both the principles and the practice of the American politicians: and men of honour and integrity, many of them beaten down by the revolution, have recovered their proper influence in quieter times. Over and above all the circumstances I have mentioned, the natural phlegm of the American character, compared with the vehemence and impetuosity of the French, was an advantage not to be calculated.

" selves in a little time, and leave the air more calm and " serene than before." The accounts that we receive of the French show clearly, that they are at present a nation of enthusiasts: of this their very crimes give the most decided evidence. Their contempt of danger and hardships; their utter disregard of self-interest, and of all the motives which influence men in tranquil life; their frantic schemes; their wild suspicions; their implacability towards their enemies; their proneness to murder; — these are the true and exact features of enthusiasm, operating on minds previously degraded by a superstition the most vile, and by a slavery the most abject.*

The more fiercely this national disease rages, the more certainly will it terminate speedily, provided it be left to itself. Society cannot possibly subsist under the present system in France, and the excesses of the Jacobins must sooner or later produce their destruction. The nation, waking from its delirium, will see the horror of its situation, and fly for a refuge from anarchy to the constitution it has rejected, or some better regulated form of government; or, perhaps, to the very despotism it has overthrown. But if continued attacks are made from without, this issue will certainly be prolonged, and may perhaps be prevented till the despotic governments now in arms, every day becoming more poor, and therefore more oppressive, shall be themselves brought to the ground!

* In Dr. Moore's Journal, various proofs of the truth of this may be found. A Sans Culotte presenting to the National Assembly on the 10th of August the head of a murdered Swiss, and at the same time emptying out of his hat the jewels and gold which he had found in the Thuilleries, is a striking picture of the species of disease of mind under which the nation labours.

The great instrument of the success of the Jacobins has been the suspicion they have constantly excited, that every friend of peace and subordination was connected with the foreign enemies that are invading France.* A high-spirited nation will not receive the purest of blessings on compulsion, and would reject the British constitution itself, though it were absolutely perfect, if presented on the bayonet's point. But what boon do the conquerors of Poland hold out to them? What blessings do the people of Germany offer to their view? Absolute subjugation to a foreign force is the favour and the mercy of the rulers; ignorance and submission to unlimited oppression is the example of the armed slaves whom they command. It is no wonder that a nation of enthusiasts should be inflamed to madness on the approach of such invaders, and spurning the dictates of reason, should consider those who would restrain them, as leagued with their enemies, and commit themselves to such only as are as frantic as themselves. Hence every attempt to restore order to France has been frustrated by foreign invasion; Clermont-Tonnerre and Rochefoucauld have been murdered; and Narbonne, La Fayette, and Liancourt have fled. And hence, also, it is but too likely that the siege of Valenciennes and Condé will prove the ruin of the brave, and perhaps honest, insurgents on the banks of the Loire. How

* The strength of such an instrument as this, may be judged of by the success with which it was employed by the *Alarmists* here. The friends of peace in this country were in the same manner denounced as leagued with foreign invaders; and this was the real secret of Messrs. Reeves, Burke, and Co. for *levelling the levellers*, at the success of which, considering the men, many people have been so much surprised. The nation was panic-struck, and apprehension and credulity go hand in hand.

certain the overthrow of the Jacobin system in France would be, if the nation were left to itself, may be gathered, not only from the nature of that system, but from the attempts to overturn it in the very face of a foreign invasion; and how very unlikely the allies are to succeed in their endeavours to give a constitution to France by force (the only rational object for which war can be continued), may be collected, not only from the history of the past, and from what has been already mentioned, but from other considerations.

Under the pressure of external invasion almost any government will hold a nation together; and every form of republican government, however unfit for quieter seasons, is at such times productive of great energy of mind, and therefore of great national force. The cause of this is to be traced to the peculiar consequence which a republican government gives to the individual, by which his country becomes of consequence to him, and the whole strength of his private and public affections in a moment of external invasion bears on a single object — the national defence. The truth of this might be amply illustrated from the history of the republics of Greece and Rome: where may be seen also, what appears so very extraordinary in modern times, the most unbounded licentiousness and confusion in the centre of the government, joined with the most formidable power on the frontiers.*

* In this respect, as well as in several others, France recals to our minds the states of antiquity. There are, indeed, circumstances of resemblance in their situation that might afford room for much curious observation; and our hesitation in applying the experience we derive from Greece or Rome to modern France is, perhaps, chiefly founded on a doubt, which at times has appeared reasonable

In times of peace the existence of primary assemblies, such as are universal in France, seems incompatible with the safety of established government; but in a situation like the present, these will be the nurseries of courage, of eloquence, of daring minds; — by giving every individual an active and personal interest in the state, they will strengthen its defence in an extraordinary manner. The division of France into districts and departments establishes within it so many rival republics, and in this way will probably produce that high-spirited emulation between neighbouring communities so dangerous to internal quiet, but to which Greece, when invaded, owed its safety in the classic ages, and perhaps Switzerland its independence in modern times.

In the progress of revolutions it is material to observe, that talents do not seem to suffer an equal degradation with principles. On the contrary, situations of continued difficulty and danger have a tendency to call them forth (in as far as they are distinct from virtue) more and more, and to strengthen and expand them, when found. In long established monarchies, such as are spread over the continent of Europe, rank has the chief, or indeed the sole influence in bestowing command, and nature in bestowing talents pays no attention to rank. But in revolutions, artificial distinctions being overturned, the order of nature is in some degree restored, and talents rise to their proper level. Hence it is that revolutions, once set on foot, have the weight of talents generally in their favour. It may be objected, indeed, that when the

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enough, whether these countries have contained beings of the same species — whether these French be indeed men, or some other description of animals.

sword is once drawn, the issue depends on military discipline and skill, and that these will always be found on the side of experience. Daily observation, however, proves that the mere mechanism of a soldier is easily and speedily learned; and the uniform voice of history tells us, that the qualities of a great general are in an especial manner the work of nature; what superior genius seems to acquire the soonest, and what all other men find it impossible to acquire at all. Hence, though in the beginning of wars discipline and established rank have usually the advantage, in the course of them nature and genius always preponderate.*

The application of these observations to the affairs of France is so obvious, that it would be superfluous, as well as tedious, to point it out.

The impossibility of conquering opinions by the sword, and the dreadful slaughter which the attempt when persisted in must necessarily occasion, may be learned from

* The whole of these observations might be illustrated from our own civil wars. Detestable as Cromwell and his associates were in many respects, they must be allowed to have possessed very superior talents both in the cabinet and the field. In the beginning of the war, military experience was entirely with the king; but, what is curious, there did not arise one good commander on his side, the gallant Montrose excepted, and he, it may be observed, was educated among the Covenanters. On the other side arose Essex, Fairfax, Cromwell, Ireton, Lambert, and Monk. Most of these had no previous acquaintance with military affairs. Cromwell, the first captain of the age, was forty-three years old before he became a soldier. These curious circumstances have not escaped Mr. Hume, nor the explanation of them. Reflecting on this subject, I have sometimes amused myself with supposing what sort of military commanders our political leaders would make; and I apprehend they would arrange themselves pretty much according to their present order. — First-rate talents are of universal application.

the revolution in the Low Countries, and the bloody transactions which were there carried on under the direction of Alva. If the great mass of the people have imbibed opinions, extermination only can root them out. Hence the *fundamentality* of the French revolution, so much exclaimed against by the weak and fearful, and so much dreaded even by the enlightened, though it will probably be the source of long internal dissensions, renders it invulnerable by foreign attack. Mr. Hume has remarked the universal and extreme reluctance with which men abandon power once possessed; and you, Mr. Pitt, can probably speak to this truth from your own feelings.—Well then, Sir, the Sans Culottes have recovered what they call their rights, and may be said to be men in power — power newly tasted, after long and hard oppression. Whether this power be good for them or not is another thing — they think it good, and that is enough. When once they have obtained quiet possession of it, they will probably abuse it, as other men in power have done before them. But while it is attempted to be wrested from them by armed force, it will rise every moment in their estimation, and death only will be able to rob them of their prize. The revolution of Poland, on the other hand, was not a *fundamental* revolution; and it was praised by Mr. Burke (a suspicious circumstance) on this account. The truth is, it was a change of the form of government, and a partial enlargement of its basis; from which, however, nine tenths of the people of Poland were entirely shut out. When the king and the nobles therefore abandoned it, the peasantry abandoned it also, and found no motive for risking their lives in defence of blessings they had not been permitted to taste. This is the real cause of the rapid success of the

confederate arms, and not the open plains and dismantled fortresses of the country, as some have supposed. The true defence of a nation in such circumstances—the only defence that is impregnable, lies in the poor man's heart; —that abandoned, the rest is easy.

In viewing this subject, so many considerations rush on the mind to show the folly of the present invasion of France, that I am compelled to dwell on general topics only; otherwise I might expatiate on the utter incapacity of the Austrian army to keep the field at all without supplies from this country, and the impossibility of our finding such supplies. Abject as the temper of the nation appears, it will not, I apprehend, submit to utter ruin; and I pronounce coolly, what I have considered deeply, that nothing but utter ruin can be the consequence of our persisting in this copartnership with the folly and bankruptcy of the continental powers. It is not enough that we pay, with English guineas extracted from the labour of our oppressed peasantry, the people of Hesse and Hanover, to fight German battles; we must support the armies of Austria also, and, from the wreck of our ruined manufactures, supply them with food, clothing, and arms. But what consummates our misfortunes is, that if by our assistance the confederates should succeed in their views, England will be blotted out of the system of Europe; Holland cannot preserve her independence a single day; a connected chain of despotism will extend over the fairest portion of the Earth; and the lamp of Liberty, that has blazed so brightly in our "Sea-girt Isle," must itself be extinguished in the universal night.*

* I purposely avoid enlarging on this view of the subject, because I think nothing so unlikely as the conquest of France. It has been

The mischief that is meditated is of a magnitude that seems more than mortal, but happily the execution of it requires more than mortal force. The ignorant and innocent slaves that are the instruments on this occasion are men; they must be clothed and fed; they have men to contend with, and are liable to the death they are sent to inflict; they may perish by the sword, by fatigue, by famine, and by disease. The new Alarics that employ them are men also, weak, ignorant, and mortal like the rest. Death will soon level them with the instruments of their guilty ambition. In a few years, or perhaps a few months, Catharine will sleep, lifeless, with Joseph, with Leopold, with *Peter the Third.* New characters, less tinctured with prejudice, will receive a portion of the spirit of the age, the systems of despotism be broken, and mortality come in aid of reason and truth.

In the mean time it is possible that Condé and Valenciennes may be taken, and that the hostile armies may march into France as before. If pursued into their own country, Frenchmen will, in all probability, continue united; and they will carry on the war, when compared to their assailants, at little expense. The men are on the spot; their provisions are behind them; muskets are in their hands; enthusiasm in their hearts. The more the nation is compressed within its centre, the more will the elasticity of its force and courage increase. The invaders will probably be again compelled to re-

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discussed in the Morning Chronicle by a writer under the signature of "A Calm Observer," with a perspicuity and force of reasoning that nothing can surpass. The whole series of letters far exceeds any similar production of the English press.

treat, and their retreat will neither be easy nor certain: the victorious republicans will pursue them, and again perhaps, disdaining the restraints of prudence, push their conquests to the banks of the Rhine. A single action lost, a single action recovered, Flanders; and Flanders and Holland will now feel the same blow. What shall save Holland if Flanders fall? The Coldstream you see are mortal men. Even the three princes of the blood-royal of England will not appal the fierce republicans. *What care these roarers for the name of King?** If the danger I state seem at a distance, let it not on that account be disregarded. Every step the allied armies advance into France, the danger seems to me to approach; and were they within ten leagues of Paris, I should tremble the more for the fate of Amsterdam.

The opportunity of restoring general peace presented itself at the time of the Congress of Antwerp. Dumourier had retreated; Flanders was recovered. We had nothing to do but to declare, what must I think be declared in the end, that *if France will confine herself within her own territory, she may there shape out her own constitution at her will.* Had this been done at the time mentioned, Dumourier, not rendered odious by foreign alliance, would, in all probability, have been able to restore the constitutional monarchy; and in every event, France, occupied by intestine divisions, would, as it seems probable, have left Europe in quiet for many years to come. This policy was so clear, that a mere child might have discerned it; it did not even require a negotiation with the French cabinet;

* Shakspeare's Tempest.

and while it secured our best interests, it left our honour without a stain.

How then shall we account for the resolves of the congress of Antwerp? We must unveil the truth. The members of this congress were German princes, or their agents; even the representative of England there *was a German prince.* Such men, from their education, are in general ignorant, and labour under prejudices, from their situation, of a destructive kind.

Military despots in their own dominions, they feel it their personal interest, perhaps they think it the interest of mankind (such may be the force of prejudice), that despotism should be universal. To such men the anarchy of France under Jacobin rulers is not half so alarming, as the constitution to which this may give birth. They are aware that the crimes acting there at present are sufficient to render the French name detestable among their subjects; but if these crimes should open the eyes of the French themselves, — if, out of the mingled wrecks of despotism and anarchy, a limited monarchy should arise in France, as it did in England, or any other form of a free constitution that secures subordination to law, — then it is that the French example will become far more destructive to arbitrary governments than their arms, and the crowned heads of Germany, great and small, will have real cause to tremble. It is true, if they were enlightened, they need not tremble at all; they would see that arbitrary power is as destructive to him that possesses, as to him that endures it. But it cannot be expected that they should discern this — the errors of education blind all but very superior minds; and though Germany produces more princes than all Europe besides, it is not once

in a century that she produces a prince that is a truly great man.*

Mr. Fox contends that government is *from* the people; Mr. Windham that it is only *for* the people. These philological distinctions are not attended to by the rulers of Germany, among whom even the word *people* is not to be found. Their *subjects*, they know, are accustomed to obedience; the blessings that flow from liberty and property they have never experienced; and they are therefore fit instruments in the hands of arbitrary power. Germany, it is well known, is inhabited chiefly by princes, nobles, musicians, and peasantry: merchants, manufacturers, and country gentlemen, the leading descriptions of Englishmen, are there almost wholly unknown. The three first of these classes are, during war, in their natural element; and the last, who sustain all the evils and all the burthens, are as yet too abject and too ignorant to make their sufferings dangerous to those by whom they are oppressed. A perseverance in the war will, indeed, destroy what little trade and manufactures there are in Germany, and render their governments (that of Hanover excepted, whose military expenses are defrayed by England,) universally bankrupt. The creditors of the states will be ruined; but the expenses of the courts and armies will not, perhaps, on that account be less.

* Frederick II. was an extraordinary man, and it has amused many persons to suppose how he might have acted on the present occasion. This, however, seems pretty certain, that he would not have lain eight months in the neighbourhood of Mentz before he found an opportunity of laying siege to it. The present conduct of the Prussians conveys an eulogium on the talents of that great monarch, beyond the power of Hertzberg's oratory. As, however, they considered themselves sacrificed before, their present backwardness may arise as much from spleen as from any other cause.

The ordinary revenue of a German prince depends chiefly on the products of the soil; and dreadful must be the oppression, indeed, before these fail. The peasantry will be taxed more and more to support increasing burthens; and the extortion of such taxes will rivet the poverty and ignorance through which alone these burthens are endured. It is thus that the tyranny of the rulers and the degradation of the people must keep equal pace; it is thus that despotism forms a natural alliance with ignorance, blasts every charm of rational nature, and blunts every feeling of the human heart. There is, indeed, a point at which the oppression of the most abject becomes no longer safe, — a point which, if I mistake not, the despotic governments of Europe are fast approaching. They have undertaken to subdue the enemies of kingly government in France, and are staking their whole credit on the issue of an undertaking from which, according to every human appearance, they will return baffled and disgraced. The most despotic governments depend for their existence on opinion, as well as the most free. If the concert of princes should be baffled, the prejudices of their subjects will be shaken, and the foundation of their thrones will from that moment be for ever insecure.

Behold then, once more, a crisis which has so often occurred in history; which has presented so frequent and so awful a warning to rulers, and has presented it so often in vain! a government bankrupt by its own waste and folly, sensible of its insecurity, and therefore jealous, irritable, and oppressive; a people already labouring under almost intolerable burthens, and doomed to suffer others more heavy still, casting off its prejudices, the habitual submission and respect to its rulers, and im-

bibing those immutable truths which are so dangerous to oppressors, and sometimes, indeed, so fatal to those who are oppressed. Every day the breach widens; the sword at length is drawn, and the scabbard cast away. In the dreadful conflict which follows there is only one alternative; the government must be overturned, or the people reduced to the condition of beasts. We cannot have forgotten the causes which have produced the revolutions of Switzerland, Holland, and England — which have so recently produced the revolution of France. The same causes are again conspiring to shake all Europe to its centre, and to form a new æra in human affairs.

What a dreadful infatuation is it which involves the fate of Englishmen in this impending ruin! — which embarks our commerce, our manufactures, our revenue, perhaps our constitution itself, the source of all our blessings, in this desperate crusade of despotism and superstition against anarchy and enthusiasm; in the course of which, however it terminate, we can reap nothing but misfortune; and in the issue of which we may learn, that no human institution can withstand the folly of those who administer its powers.

Men of Switzerland, how I respect you! While the hurricane of human passions sweeps over France, Italy, and Germany, elevated on your lofty mountains, you are above the region of the storm. Secure in your native sense, your sincere patriotism, your simple governments, your invincible valour, your eternal hills — you can look down on the follies and the crimes which desolate Europe, with calmness and with pity, and anticipate the happy æra when, perhaps, you may mediate universal peace. Sea-girt Britain might have enjoyed this situation, had

she known how to estimate her blessings, and kept aloof from the madness of the day.

At this moment the session of parliament closes;—a dead stillness prevails over England, the natural consequence of astonishment at the spreading destruction, and of strong passions violently suppressed. The Opposition, deserted by all those *feeble amateurs* whose minds have not sufficient comprehension to discern the true interest of their country, or whose nerves are too weak to bear up against vulgar prejudice, has endeavoured, but in vain, to discover the extent of our continental engagements, or the real objects of the war.* Two hundred and eighty members, ranging behind you, support every measure you propose; and, among the whole number, not a man has been found to enquire of you openly, in the name and in behalf of the people of England, how long their patience is to endure, and how far the progress of ruin is to extend.

You have assumed, on this awful occasion, the whole responsibility of public measures; and your character and reputation, I fear you mistakingly conceive, are wholly committed on the successful issue of the war. Your real friends must sincerely lament this on your own account; the friends of their country will lament it, on account of the general calamities it is likely to produce. The nation, Mr. Pitt, has loved you "well—not wisely;" and it is partly in consequence of this that, at the present moment, her real interests are opposed to the personal honour of him she has trusted and idolised. In this day of distress she is told to repose in the constitutional responsibility of ministers. "Be still, ye in-

* Security and compensation are words that may be explained at pleasure.

habitants of the isle, thou whom the merchants of Zidon that pass over the sea have replenished." — ISAIAH. Alas! what will silence do? Will the responsibility of ministers restore her ruined trade, feed her starving manufacturers? Will it replace the husband and father to the widow or the orphan, or restore to the aged parent his gallant son? Will it recall to life the brave men now mouldering in unhallowed earth in Flanders, joint-tenants of a common grave with those against whom they fought? *

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If I were bold enough to appreciate your political life, Mr. Pitt, I should be inclined to allow the outset of it extraordinary merit. The sentiment of approbation that attended you was, indeed, almost universal, — you were the hope of the good, the pride of the wise, the idol of your country. If your official career had terminated with the discussions on the Regency, though one of the most fatal of your mistakes had been committed before this, it may be questioned whether modern Europe could have produced a politician or an orator more strenuous, more exalted, more authoritative †; one whose ambition was apparently more free from selfishness; who afforded to his opponents less room for censure, or gave to his friends more frequent occasions of generous triumph and honest applause. The errors that you have fallen into are natural for men long possessed of power uncontrolled; and in imputing them to you, I accuse you only of the weaknesses of human nature.

* This affecting circumstance is, I am told, literally true.

† See Mr. Grattan's character of Lord Chatham, printed as Dr. Robertson's.

It is not necessary to a free people to have rulers exempt from such weaknesses; but it is necessary for them to watch and to guard against these infirmities.

It is natural, I believe, for successful ambition to seek new objects on which it may exert itself. Hence, after you had subdued opposition in England, you issued forth, like another Hercules, in quest of new adventures; and traversed the Continent of Europe to seek monsters whom you might subdue. You could not, however, but be sensible, that the reputation of a minister of trade and finance, which you had justly obtained, was incompatible with that of a great war minister in the present state of the nation. You took, therefore, the middle line; you made preparations for fighting on every occasion, but you took care not to strike. England might, perhaps, bear the expense of arming, but could not actually go to war; and this secret, which your three successive armaments discovered to all Europe, led Mirabeau on his death-bed to give you the name of *ministre préparatif.*

In men long in possession of power, a secret sympathy (unknown, perhaps, to themselves) is gradually strengthening in favour of others in the same situation; and a secret prejudice, amounting perhaps at last to enmity, against opposition to power in every form. Hence the danger you saw to England in the triumph of the patriots of Holland over the Prince of Orange, and the safety we acquired from the subjugation of the Dutch by the Prussian arms. Hence, also, the perfect composure with which you expected the conquest of France by the despots of Germany, and the sudden alarm with which you were seized on the repulsion of that invasion, and the overrunning of Flanders by the republican arms.

By the freedom of Brabant, the constitution of England might be endangered; but it became the more secure in your eye, it should seem, by the extension of despotism over every corner of Europe, and the success of foreign bayonets in rooting out *liberty* as well as licentiousness in France.

It is also to the unhappy prejudices of your situation that I attribute your want of moderation of temper on occasions of the utmost moment; your allying your great talents with the weak judgments and violent passions of those around you; and your blindness (if such it be) to the real dangers of this commercial nation, and to the path of safety and of true honour, which it was no less your duty than your interest to pursue.

In contemplating events of such magnitude as those connected with the French revolution, the utmost calmness, as well as comprehension of mind, is required — and more particularly required in him who directs the affairs of a great nation. Unhappily these qualities are seldom found in any station; and this revolution, seen in part only, has become the object of wild encomium, or of bitter reprobation, as the prejudices of men have been affected, or their sympathies engaged. The most prudent part, perhaps, for one whose political situation is influenced by the opinions he is supposed to hold, is to be silent on the subject. It is uncertain how this extraordinary event may terminate, and its ultimate effects on the human race cannot yet be ascertained. At present, however, it is well known, that not in England only, but in every part of Europe, the dreadful excesses in Paris, and elsewhere, have turned the tide of popular sentiment and opinion strongly against the French. Even under the most despotic governments, the people

at present hug their chains, and tyranny itself is secure. Can it then be supposed, that in England there is any serious danger from the contagion of French principles; in England, where the constitution is so substantially good, and the people so loyal and united? The theological and sectarian prejudices of different and opposite kinds through which the affairs of France have been viewed, have indeed contributed most fatally to bewilder the understanding, and to inflame the prejudices of Englishmen; and to these is to be imputed, in a great degree, that most singular delusion — that the safety of our constitution has depended on our risking all our blessings in this most fruitless, expensive, and bloody war. That delusion (for such I consider it) is now, I hope, nearly over; and peace, which is the general interest, will soon, I doubt not, be the universal wish. Every consideration calls loudly for it; and it may be much more easily obtained now, when our enemies are humbled, and the people of England are still patient and silent, than at a future period, when the invading armies may be checked or repulsed, and the nation is become openly impatient under the expense and ruin of the war. A man of your sagacity will easily discern, that in times like the present, the gale of popular opinion is constantly shifting the point whence it blows, and will see that it cannot be trusted to carry you forward in your present course, in the face of great and increasing obstacles.

The present state of affairs in this country, and on the Continent of Europe, forms a subject too interesting to be left without reluctance — but far too extensive to be thoroughly investigated within the limits of a letter like this. The events of the day that is passing are likely to affect every portion of Europe, and, in their conse-

quences, the condition of the human race throughout the habitable earth. Many of the "bearings and ties" of this important subject I have been obliged to neglect, and others I have only glanced at; for I write on the spur of the occasion, and under difficulties and interruptions of various kinds. Should what I have written have the fortune to reach you, you will see that it is addressed to you more "in sorrow than in anger," and on that account alone that it is not wholly unworthy of your regard. But I would farther persuade myself that it may suggest topics for serious reflection, by impressing on your mind the progress and unexampled extension of the war-system throughout Europe; the corresponding progress of the funding-system; the crisis which this last has in some countries reached, and is every where approaching; and the probable as well as certain effects of this on our own commercial nation and on mankind at large.

Hitherto you have taken it for granted, that though there is a certain point of depression to which the commerce of this country may sink in consequence of the war, yet that from this, as in former wars, it will naturally return. I have suggested to you, that this supposition is dangerous, as well as fallacious, from the increased progress of our debts and taxes, from the locking up of the capital of our manufacturers in foreign debts, and from the growing poverty as well as the general bankruptcy that spreads over Europe, in consequence of the continued pressure of former burthens, and the unexampled extent and expense of the present war. I have not stated to you, under this head, the effects of a rapidly sinking revenue, or of the emigration of our people to America; because these considerations are so extremely serious, that they cannot be mentioned without grief and

alarm, and may form, of themselves, a very ample subject for separate discussion.

Mr. Dundas told us, in the House of Commons, that our commercial distresses arose from our extraordinary prosperity, and boasted that all the world united with us in the war against France. I have shown that this assertion is a poor sophism, and his boast a subject of sorrow and apprehension.

Mr. Windham expressed his acquiescence in the loss of our commerce, if we might retain our constitution; and on the same ground of preserving our constitution, this perilous war has been often defended by yourself, your followers, and a great part of the nation. I have made out to you, what I know not how, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, you can well be ignorant of, that our commerce and our constitution have a most intimate dependence on each other; and that when the union is formed by twenty-four millions of taxes, tithes, and poor-rates, and two hundred and fifty millions of debt, they may be considered as embarked in the same adventure, and as likely to perish in the same storm.

How the war commenced, I have endeavoured to explain; and you will consider in your calmer moments, whether you really exerted yourself to preserve peace by negotiation, instead of procuring it by arms; and to what profit you have turned the honest affection of your countrymen for their constitution and king, and the generous indignation with which they surveyed the madness and brutality of their neighbours.

On various occasions during this bloody contest I have shown that the peace of Europe was in our power; that it was in our power recently on the retreat of Dumourier, and after we ourselves had tasted the

calamities of war. Why it was rejected, you must yourself explain; — I have described the congress at Antwerp, and am no farther master of the subject.

The views that you conceal cannot be ascertained, but what you have actually performed is not liable to misapprehension. I have suggested to you, that you have united Englishmen in the interests and in the councils of those who formed the treaty of Pillnitz; who retain La Fayette in chains; who were the real cause of the triumphs of the Jacobin party in France over limited monarchy; who are in fact the pretext that the present anarchists have employed, and will employ, to justify their desperate proceedings; and who, by their recent conduct in Poland, have given such proofs of their ambition, as well as of their power, as must fill the heart of every friend of his species with horror and alarm. That the destroyers of the constitution of Poland can be friendly to our own, the model on which it was formed, no one will believe. They are the deadly foes of liberty throughout the world; and I might have shown you, that in the destruction of our revenue and commerce, the bulwarks will be removed which secure us from their overwhelming force. I might also have pointed out the danger of sending our army to fight under their banners, and our princes to associate in their councils; — but there are sentiments of serious alarm which a lover of his country must deeply feel, that in this season of delusion it may be dangerous to utter.

Of the two motives for continuing the war, security and compensation, I have considered that which alone I can understand, the former; and have shown that the attempt to take and to separate from France its frontier towns on the north, is full of difficulty and hazard, and

that while it may render the war doubly bloody and desperate, it can afford no security beyond what might be obtained from fortifying Austrian Flanders, already in our power. The true security to this country arising from the settlement of the French government, I have endeavoured to show, is not promoted, but absolutely prevented by the present invasion, which, should it be repelled, may leave unfortified Brabant, as well as Holland, an easy conquest to the republican arms.

In the fearful tragedy which is now acting on the theatre of Europe, you have unhappily made England one of the persons of the drama, and she cannot but act a part of unparalleled importance. You have assumed the direction of this part to yourself; and before parliament again meets, the hopes and the fears of the enlightened, and the real interest of at least the present race of mankind, may be at issue on your single counsels. More than one false step you have already made — the precipice is directly in your path, that leads to inevitable destruction. I know the temptations and the difficulties of your situation: we will forget the past; but if you advance, how shall you be forgiven?

In considering the aspect of the present times, I am sometimes affected with deep melancholy; yet I am not one of those who despair of the fortunes of the human race. Through the thick clouds and darkness that surround us, I discern the workings of an overruling mind. Superstition I know is the natural offspring of ignorance, and governs in the dark ages with a giant's strength.— Unassisted reason is a feeble enemy; opposed to superstition, reason, in days of ignorance, is a dwarf. In the order of Providence, enthusiasm arises to resist superstition—to combat a monster with a monster's force.

What did Erasmus in the days of Luther? What would Lowth have done in the days of Wycliffe, or Blair in those of Knox? In the councils of Heaven, mean and wicked instruments are often employed for the highest purposes. The authors of the Reformation were many of them ignorant, fierce, and even bloody; but the work itself was of the most important and most universal benefit to the human race. The *despotism* of priests then received its death-wound; and the *despotism* of princes has now, perhaps, sustained a similar blow.—Pure religion has survived and improved after the first; the true science of government may improve after the last, and be built every where on the solid foundations of utility and law. Before such happy consequences ensue, dreadful commotions may indeed be expected over Europe; commotions which England, and perhaps England only, may, if she is wise, escape. The present generation will probably be swept away before the intellectual earthquake subsides; but those who succeed them will, I trust, find the air more pure and balmy, and the skies more bright and serene.

June 6. 1793. *J. W.*

POSTSCRIPT.

In printing a second edition of this letter, it may not be useless to enquire, how far the events which have happened since its first publication correspond to the representations, or illustrate the reasonings, it contains.

Your warmest and most injudicious partizans, Mr. Pitt, will not deny that the bankrupt state of the Continental powers, our allies, becomes every day more evident.—Englishmen have had a melancholy proof of the nature of the connections they have formed, not merely in the subsidies to Hanover, or to that flower of chivalry the Prince of Hesse (who sells the lives of his subjects at the rate of thirty banco crowns for each), but in the succours demanded by the Austrians to enable them to keep the field; in the ruin of the commerce as well as the finance of Russia (when the ruble, by the regular operations of its government, is reduced, in foreign exchange, to less than half its value); and in that most unprecedented of all treaties with the King of Sardinia, by which we are to pay him two hundred thousand pounds annually, to keep up his own army, for defence of his own country!

Though the merchants of this kingdom felt the sad effects of the war first, it was predicted that on the manufacturers it would fall with the most unrelenting ruin. The truth of this is now undeniable; even the woollen and iron branches of manufacture, which in former wars in a great measure escaped, are now almost

in a state of stagnation. He who handled the shuttle for three shillings a day, must now take sixpence, and handle the spear; and many of the enlightened and virtuous assertors of the constitution at Birmingham, so successful in their skirmishes with heresy and the beasts of the flesh, are now doomed to a harder service on the frontiers of France, where the "Bubble Reputation" must be "sought," not in the libraries or laboratories, or peaceful habitations of unprotected science, but in the hostile fortress, and "in the cannon's mouth."

The reasoning respecting paper-money is also confirmed. So far from this being the cause of our commercial distresses, it is now found, under proper regulations, to be the best alleviation for them that the times admit; and a bank is proposed at Glasgow, and one has been established at Liverpool, for this express purpose.

What was observed on the subject of the supposed plots and conspiracies, which have so fatally bewildered the understandings of men, seems also to be strengthened by the progress of events. The trial of Mr. Frost, from which so much was expected, is now before the public; and the tenderness of the recorder of Leicester has sunk deep into the public mind. The zeal and activity of government have instituted various prosecutions, and leave no reason to suppose that, through mistaken lenity, treason or sedition have been spared. As yet, however, the shadow of a conspiracy has not been discovered. If there be men, Mr. Pitt, lurking in the bosom of their country, who have plotted with France for the destruction of our constitution, let their guilty blood stream on the scaffold; the minister who would spare them is himself a traitor: but let not the friends

of their king and country who oppose your present measures, be involved in so foul a charge, "to fright the isle from its propriety," and to involve Us still deeper in this ruinous war.

With regard to those men who have persuaded themselves that the safety of England depends on her persisting in the invasion of France till monarchy shall be forced on that kingdom by the allied arms, the occurrences of the last two months on the Continent may abate their confidence, and dispose them to regard, with more attention and alarm, our situation at home. The fearful diminution of our existing revenue, and the increased expenses of the war, will require, it is evident, new methods and objects of taxation; these our wounded commerce and our diminished consumption cannot possibly support; and the necessity of increasing the land-tax is already incurred: but if the war continues, eight shillings in the pound will do little towards the support of the public expenditure, which, even on the peace establishment (if poor-rates be included), already exceeds the gross amount of all the landlords' rents in England; a tax on the funds, of which the Dutch have long ago set us the example, may, therefore, be expected, and may at last rouse the monied men from that blind and selfish acquiescence in the measures of every administration, which has been the chief support of our war-politics. A friend, Sir, to the family on the throne, to our limited monarchy, and our constitution of three estates, — a friend, above all, to the interests of my country, and the happiness of the human race, I deprecate the continuance of this dreadful war: my reasons are now before you and the public. However ineffectual my humble exertions may be to ward off the

impending calamities, I shall still have the satisfaction of having performed my duty, and can appeal to the Searcher of Hearts for the purity of my views.

God of peace and love! look down in mercy on thy erring creatures, and bid hatred, madness, and murder cease!

July 25. 1793. *J. W.*

THE END.

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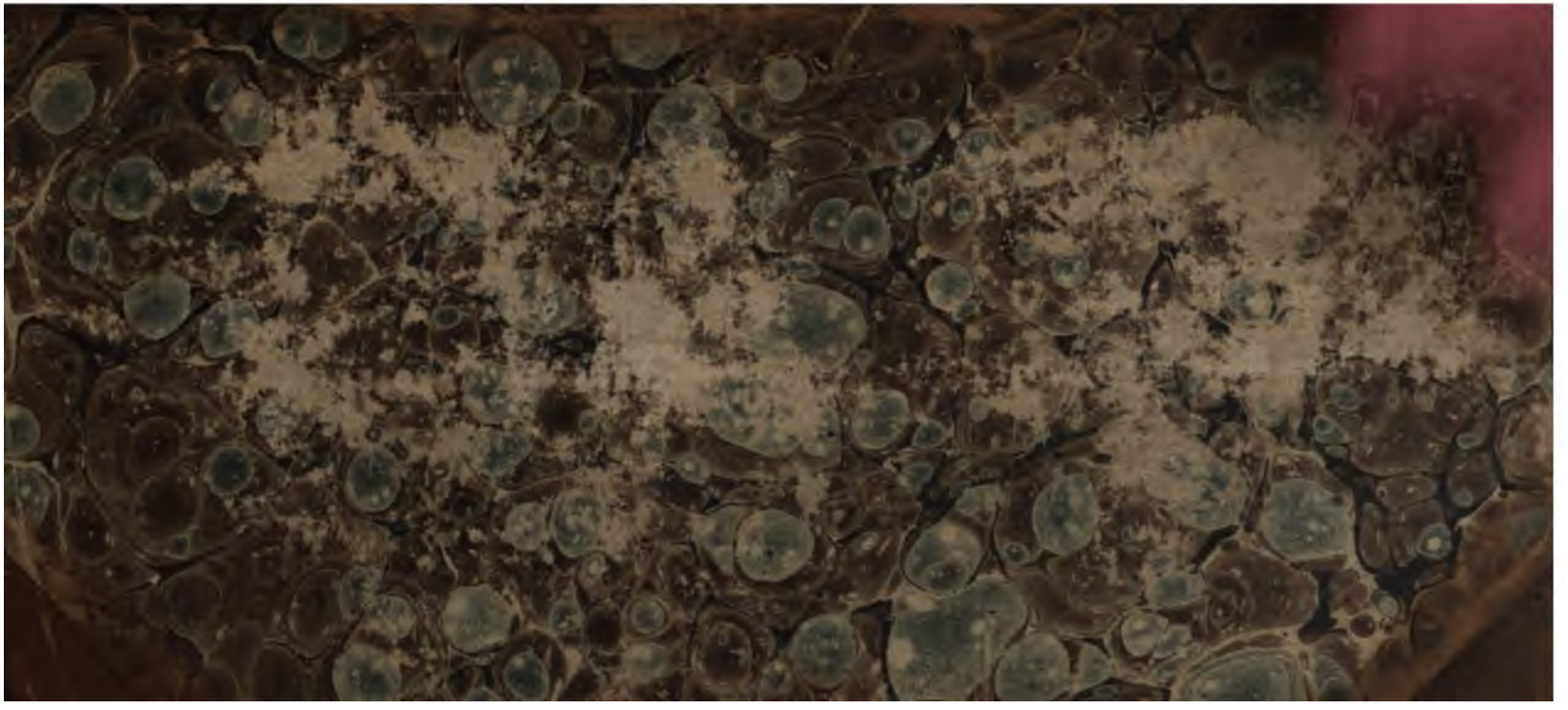
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